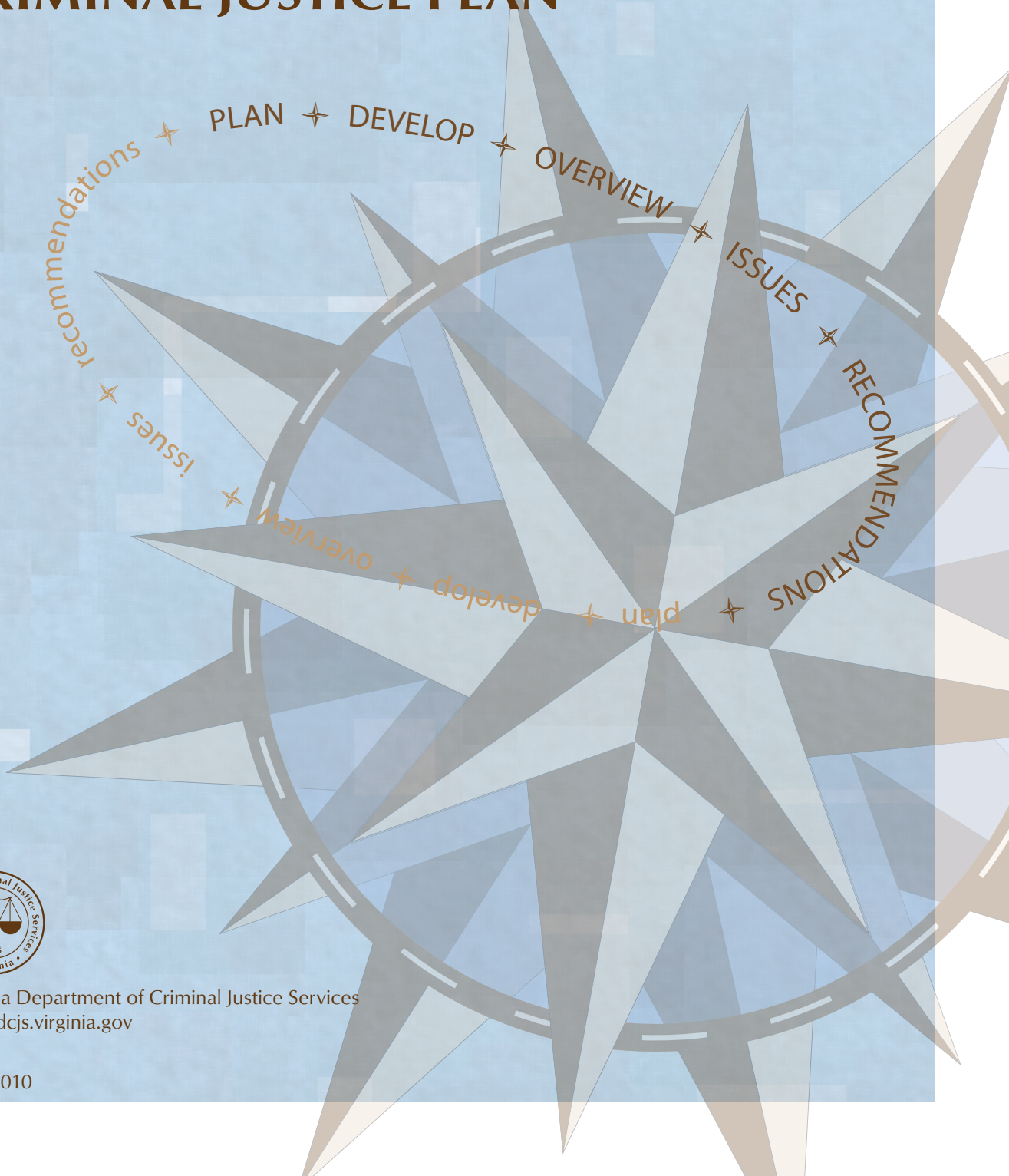


Setting a Course for the Future of the Criminal Justice System in Virginia: VIRGINIA'S STATEWIDE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN



Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
www.dcjs.virginia.gov

June 2010

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PLAN

Why a Statewide Criminal Justice Plan?

The *Code of Virginia* (§9.1-102(25)) directs the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to develop a “comprehensive, statewide, long-range plan for strengthening and improving law enforcement and the administration of criminal justice throughout the Commonwealth.”

The Secretary of Public Safety is responsible for guiding law enforcement and the administration of criminal justice on behalf of the Governor. The statewide criminal justice plan was developed to help the Secretary meet this responsibility. The Secretary oversees fourteen state agencies with 22,000 employees and combined budgets exceeding \$2 billion annually. These agencies are responsible for numerous public safety functions including:

- Enforcing criminal laws and conducting criminal investigations;
- Training and education for prosecutors;
- Confining 31,000 felons and monitoring more than 55,000 probationers and parolees;
- Operating juvenile correctional and detention facilities;
- Conducting forensic analysis of crime scene evidence;
- Credentialing and regulating over 30,000 law enforcement and correctional personnel;
- Licensing more than 30,000 private security personnel;
- Distributing nearly \$300 million in grants and other funds to state and local public safety agencies;
- Planning and coordinating emergency preparedness, response and recovery, and
- Developing statewide criminal justice directions, goals and policies.

The Secretary’s office also works with the General Assembly and the Supreme Court of Virginia, as well as with other state agencies involved with transportation, substance abuse, mental health, social services, and education.

Understanding and overseeing all of these varying aspects of the criminal justice system is a complex task. Policymakers in the Secretary’s office must continuously monitor and respond to ongoing and emerging issues; respond to demands from the Governor, legislature, courts, local governments and the public; and balance the competing priorities, needs and resources of many different public safety agencies.

The statewide criminal justice plan is designed to help the Secretary exercise this oversight. On behalf of the Secretary, the Department of Criminal Justice Services gathered, analyzed and interpreted information from across the criminal justice system to identify the broad, critical issues that require attention in the Commonwealth.

DEVELOP

How the Plan was Developed

DCJS used a comprehensive, objective process to identify the issues to include in the criminal justice plan. A major goal was to avoid including issues in the plan simply because they were temporarily high-profile (i.e., the media ‘crime of the month’), or because they were favored by the current political or social climate. Instead, the process was designed to identify serious, ongoing public safety issues supported by a broad body of evidence and which appear to provide opportunities for making substantial improvements to the criminal justice system as a whole. The following steps were taken in the development of the plan.

First, DCJS convened more than 150 criminal justice and related professionals from across Virginia in eight regional focus groups to identify potential issues that the plan should address. The members of the groups represented crime and delinquency prevention, law enforcement, prosecution, institutional and community corrections, substance abuse, crime victims’ services, mental health, education, and others. Each group reviewed statistical reports on crime levels and crime-related trends in Virginia, and discussed the issues they encounter in their daily “in the trenches” work. Based on the insight and experience of its members, each group then developed a consensus as to the most important issues confronting the criminal justice system.

Second, DCJS researched the issues to gather additional evidence on their criticality. Reports, policy statements and other sources from federal agencies, criminal justice agencies in other states, and major national criminal justice associations, were examined. Additionally, Virginia criminal justice related studies, policies and laws were examined to determine if these issues were recognized as important by executive orders, legislative language, and the strategic plans, mission statements and research/planning reports of Virginia public safety agencies. This research confirmed that the issues identified by the focus groups were recognized as important both nationally and in Virginia. The findings of the focus groups, and the additional topical research by DCJS, were then documented in the DCJS report, *Setting a Course for the Future of the Criminal Justice System in Virginia: Environmental Scan*, available at www.dcjs.virginia.gov/ppr/documents/08EnvironmentalScan.pdf.

Third, the topics identified in the Environmental Scan report were presented to a group representing state-level criminal justice system and related bodies. These included the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Services Council; the Departments of Corrections, Criminal Justice Services, Juvenile Justice, and State Police; Office of the Attorney General; the Supreme Court of Virginia; the private security services industry; the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance; and the state Departments of Education, Health, and Social Services. This group also confirmed and acknowledged the topics previously identified as critical issues for inclusion in the plan. The group conducted meetings, attended by various criminal justice subject matter experts, to draft for the Secretary recommendations to address the issues identified in the statewide criminal justice plan.

OVERVIEW

Overview of Critical Criminal Justice Issues

Based on the plan development process, 21 major topics emerged as critical, overarching issues that should be addressed in the statewide criminal justice plan:

1. Coordination and collaboration
2. Information sharing
3. Using technology
4. Diverting nonviolent offenders from jails and prisons
5. Prisoner reentry into society
6. Recruiting and retaining criminal justice personnel
7. Multidisciplinary training
8. Standardized training and testing for law enforcement officers
9. Juvenile delinquency and crime prevention
10. Improving the juvenile justice system
11. Gangs
12. Preventing crime
13. Security at schools and college/university campuses
14. Domestic preparedness
15. Mental illness
16. The impact of illegal drugs
17. Substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation
18. Equality and consistency
19. Immigration
20. Victims of crime
21. Public awareness

Each of these issues, and the recommendations developed for addressing them, are discussed in the next section. As the issues are reviewed, it is important to keep the following in mind:

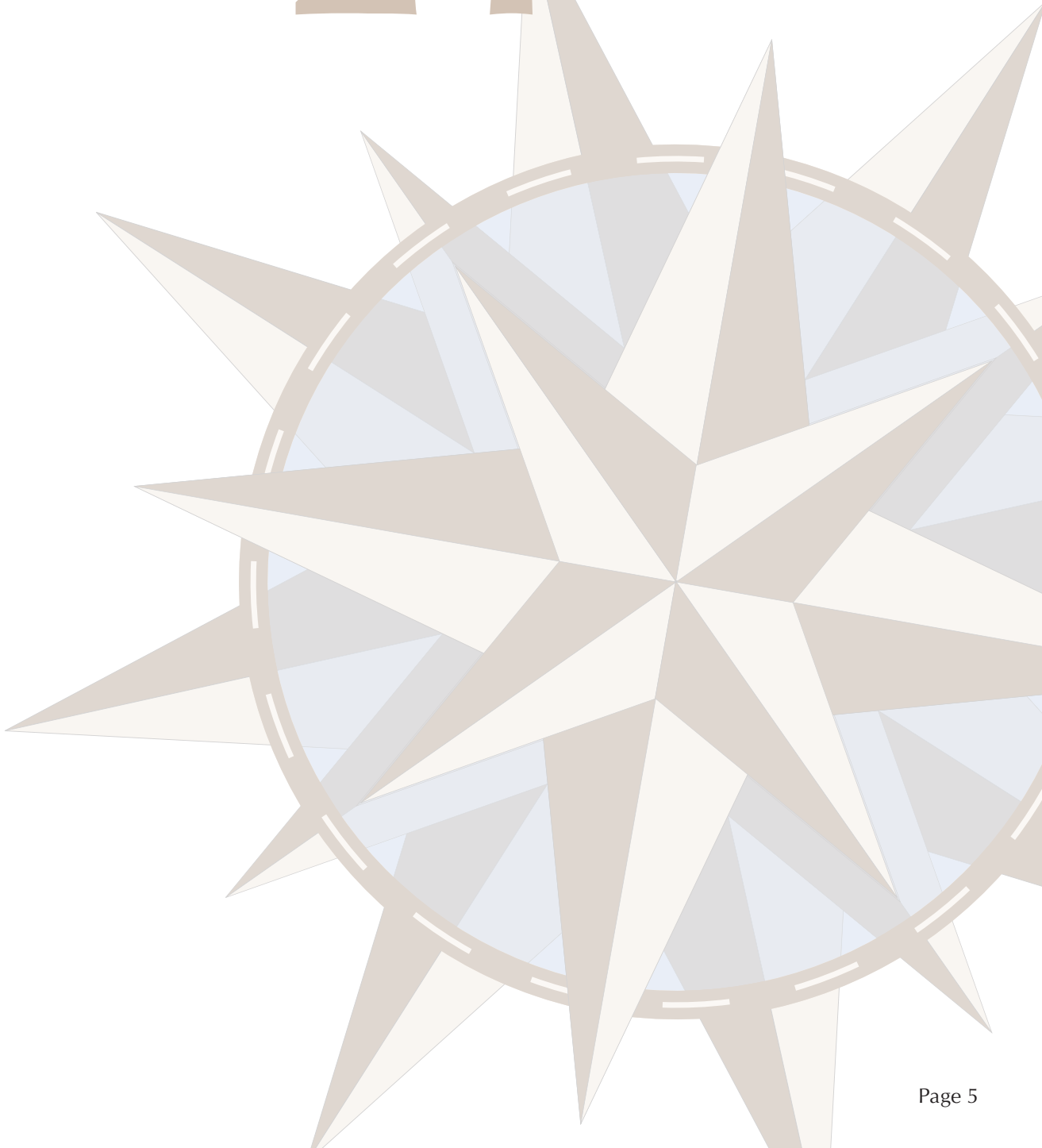
- This list is not all-inclusive. Many other important critical justice topics or issues were identified during the plan's development, but were excluded while working toward a consensus on what were the most important issues.
- Including a topic in the plan does not mean that the Commonwealth is not already addressing the topic, or implies criticism of how it is being addressed. It simply means that there was a consensus that Virginia needs to do more about the topic, or do it better.
- The plan avoids making detailed recommendations for action to address these topics. It does not recommend specific changes to the *Code of Virginia*, specific actions to be taken by individual public safety agencies, or specific budget items. This level of detail is best determined in concert with the individuals and agencies that have expertise in specific criminal justice areas.
- The terms "criminal justice agencies" and "public safety agencies" are often used interchangeably and in the broadest sense throughout the plan. They are meant to encompass adult and juvenile corrections, law enforcement, courts and the judicial system, prosecutors, victims' services programs and others.

The criminal justice plan offers broad recommendations to help policy-makers identify areas where action is needed, and within which they can then shape more detailed priorities, decisions, plans and budgets.



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Critical Criminal Justice Issues Discussion and Recommendations



1 COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Overview

The government's criminal justice functions and powers are spread across three branches of government — legislative, executive, and judicial — to create a system of checks and balances. Criminal justice functions also are distributed among three different levels of government: federal, state and local. These Constitutional and statutory barriers are deliberately intended to preserve our form of government and protect citizens' rights. However, criminal justice agencies themselves often create additional obstacles that impede or prevent collaboration and coordination. Individual agencies focus on their own missions and lose sight of how their activities affect other agencies. Agencies struggle to protect their "turf," or the information they hold, or their share of limited resources. All of these factors typically hinder collaboration and coordination, reducing efficiency and effectiveness.

Nonetheless, the criminal justice agencies still must operate as parts of a system. No part can function independently; decisions and actions taken in any single part of the system can have system-wide effects. Improving collaboration and cooperation among the many different parts of the system offers many advantages. It can lead to a deeper understanding of crime and criminal justice problems and solutions; help establish clearer system-wide objectives and priorities; and help agencies become more efficient, timely, cost-effective and productive. All of these improvements can help the criminal justice system better serve the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Findings

The Workgroup identified improving collaboration and coordination between criminal justice agencies and organizations as potentially *the single most important action that public safety officials could take to improve public safety and criminal justice in Virginia*. Improving system-wide collaboration and coordination would help to address all of the other topics cited in this plan, and help address many other concerns within public safety that are not mentioned in this plan. Furthermore, improving collaboration and coordination has great potential to provide significant returns without requiring a major monetary investment.

What Needs to be Done

1. **Establish periodic meetings of officials from all major public safety agencies and related bodies, for the specific purpose of increasing and improving collaboration and coordination between them.**

Meetings between different public safety agency officials and staff usually occur to address a specific topic or initiative, or to deal with unexpected "brush fires." Because of the importance of collaboration and coordination generally, the Secretary of Public Safety should create an ongoing group or "coordinating committee" dedicated to this function. The Workgroup cited its own membership and organization as a possible model for such a group. It includes representatives from the Departments of Corrections, Correctional Education, Criminal Justice Services, Forensic Science, Juvenile Justice and State Police, as well as from the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, the Parole Board, and the Supreme Court. Subject matter experts from these and other groups are also invited to attend the meetings when they are needed. Topics to be considered at these types of meetings could include the following:

- Public safety initiatives that will have inter-branch and/or interagency impacts. Early discussions of such initiatives by all of the affected organizations could help to anticipate, understand and plan for system-wide impacts of the initiative. This proactive approach would help to avoid unexpected outcomes or unanticipated needs for actions or resources later.



- Legislative proposals that will have inter-branch and/or interagency impacts. Early discussions of proposed legislation would allow for a coordinated response to or position on the legislation before it is introduced, while there is time to rationally analyze its impacts. Currently, these reviews often take place during the legislative session and are often rushed. Similar early reviews of public safety budget proposals could help to reduce cases in which agencies find themselves competing against one another for funds during budget deliberations.
- Finding and taking advantage of opportunities for collaboration on specific projects with inter-branch and/or interagency impacts. These could include projects affecting administrative processes, communications, information sharing, etc. For example, if executive branch agencies wished to pursue using electronic signatures to speed the flow of records that are legal documents, this could be discussed early on with the Supreme Court to reach an agreement on judicial participation.
- Finding and taking advantage of opportunities for collaboration in seeking funding. Some agencies are more 'plugged into' federal and private grant funding sources than others. Some have staff that is more experienced and skilled in identifying grant funding opportunities, and at producing successful grant applications. Additionally, federal funding agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Justice Programs and others are increasingly stressing inter-governmental cooperation and resource-sharing as a factor in awarding grants.

The current Workgroup is composed only of state government officials. Its members recognized that any body established to coordinate broad public safety efforts will also require input from representatives of local public safety agencies such as police, sheriffs, and community corrections. A process for obtaining this input should be part of the coordinating body.

The coordinating group should be institutionalized and authoritatively led, with a clear purpose and regular meeting schedule. Otherwise, it may wither for lack of attention and participation. The group also should help maintain continuity for inter-branch and inter-agency initiatives that span more than one Governor's administration. Collaborative initiatives, especially those important to government functions, but with low political visibility, flounder when administrations change and attention is diverted to high-visibility projects favored by the new administration.

2. Ensure that any group established to increase public safety collaboration and coordination includes the Supreme Court of Virginia.

In the criminal justice system, the courts play a central role in how information and cases flow through the system. Both law enforcement and corrections are executive branch functions, but information, cases and offenders that move between these two areas flow through courts. Although the executive and judicial are different branches of government, it is critical that each be aware of and collaborate on initiatives that affect each other's activities.

2 INFORMATION SHARING

Overview

Every day, information about thousands of crimes, cases, defendants and inmates flows from one organization to another throughout the criminal justice system. Many of the routine decisions and actions that must happen to make the system work depend on the timely movement and sharing of accurate information. Despite this fact, information sharing remains a major challenge for criminal justice agencies. The costs of poor information sharing often come to light only after they are highlighted by events such as the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the October 2002 Beltway Sniper shootings, or the May 2007 mass shooting at Virginia Tech.

Poor information sharing also imposes less visible, but far more frequent, ongoing costs on the criminal justice system. It hampers criminal investigations and solving crimes, delays the identification and apprehension of offenders, slows court case processing, and contributes to jail and prison overcrowding. All of this leads to costly delays, duplication and wasted resources in carrying out routine, everyday public safety operations, which in turn compromises public safety. It also reduces the amount of information that state and local officials have available to make sound, cost-effective public safety policy and spending decisions.

Findings

The Workgroup identified several major challenges to information sharing in the criminal justice system. One challenge is laws, policies and practices that restrict or hinder critical information sharing between agencies. Laws to control the sharing and dissemination of information are vital to balancing privacy rights and criminal justice needs, but these laws should be comprehensively examined to identify where they could be modified to enhance public safety. Another challenge is the lack of information and data standards. There are few standards to foster the use of commonly understood terminology and data across the entire criminal justice system, and no effective governance structure to provide such standards. The lack of data quality controls also impedes effective information sharing throughout the system.

What Needs to be Done

- 1. Review information sharing laws and policies to ensure that information critical for public safety is available to those who need it. Ensure that public safety and criminal justice personnel know what information they can and cannot legally share.**

Laws and policies to control the use of information that can threaten individual rights are vital. However, public safety officials should periodically review these laws and policies to determine if they are impediments to legitimate and appropriate information sharing that is necessary to maintain public safety. Such reviews usually occur following specific incidents, such as the reviews and changes to the sharing of mental health information following the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings. Other areas of privacy law that should be examined for their impacts on public safety include sharing information about juvenile offenders, information sharing with social and human services agencies, information about substance abuse by offenders, and sharing information across state lines.

Equally as important is ensuring that criminal justice system personnel know what information they can and cannot legally share. Some Workgroup members reported having problems obtaining information that they were legally entitled to receive, because others in the criminal justice system were confused about dissemination rights. When confronted with such confusion, an agency will sometimes withhold information rather than risk incurring penalties for improperly disseminating it. In other cases, agencies are unsure what to do with information due to confusion about whether, and when, information should legally be retained or destroyed.



2. Expand the use of technology that improves information sharing.

When thoughtfully applied, technology can make information sharing fast, effective and affordable. However, public safety agencies are often hindered by incompatible technologies that make information sharing difficult. One reason for this is that state and local public safety agencies often purchase information technology based on their own needs, without fully considering how well it will allow them to exchange information with other agencies. The result is systems that cannot “talk” to one another.

As overseers of a major funding source for state and local public safety information technology projects, state public safety officials should encourage the use of technology that supports information sharing between all major state and local public safety agencies, including the court system. By encouraging the adoption and use of compatible systems, state government could improve public safety by ensuring that personnel in the system have the information they need, when and where they need it. Encouraging such compatibility could also save resources by eliminating costly delays and duplication in information gathering and exchange.

3. Develop and use information standards that improve information sharing.

Effective information sharing also requires the use of compatible information standards. Compatible information *technology* has limited value without compatible information *standards* to ensure that people in one part of the criminal justice system can interpret the information they receive from elsewhere in the system. Public safety officials should support the development of system-wide standards for data that refers to crimes, charges, offenders, sentences and other basic criminal justice concepts and events. Adoption of these standards would solve many of the problems caused by incompatible technologies. Additionally, there should be basic standards for the quality of the information that is disseminated throughout the system, to ensure that the data are as complete and accurate as possible. Regardless of how easily it can be shared, agencies will be hesitant to use information that they feel is incomplete or inaccurate.

Any standards developed by the Commonwealth should also be compatible with federal information sharing and reporting standards. Standards such as the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) from the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice, and from the FBI's National Criminal Information Center (NCIC), allow states and the federal government to share information nationally, not just within a single state. In some cases, the use of these standards is required by federal law. Compliance with these standards is also encouraged or required to obtain federal funding for developing and upgrading state and local information sharing systems.

3

USING TECHNOLOGY

Overview

Complex technology increasingly drives the modern criminal justice system. Automated search engines routinely sift and sort mountains of information on crimes, cases and offenders. Law enforcement agencies use predictive analysis and crime mapping to control crime. Forensic investigators use ‘touch DNA’ to gather and analyze forensic evidence. Courts use automated docketing systems to schedule and manage cases. Correctional agencies use biometric identifiers, satellite GPS systems, and advanced drug testing to monitor offenders.

Advanced technologies appear and evolve so fast that it is difficult to keep up with them. It is even more difficult for criminal justice officials and practitioners to understand which technologies are viable and worth adopting, what are the legal and ethical ramifications of using them, and what policies, practices and training are needed to guide their use. Criminal justice officials and agencies also have to keep up with these advances so they can respond to new and more sophisticated types of criminal activities that are enabled by these new technologies.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that the criminal justice system must follow emerging technologies and anticipate and plan for their applications and impacts, not simply react to them after they arrive. However, keeping abreast of public safety technology is challenging. Few criminal justice agencies have the staff, time or resources to follow and understand all of the rapidly changing technologies that can affect their operations.

Furthermore, state-level criminal justice officials know little about what types of technology are already being used across the Commonwealth. This makes it difficult to devise state-level planning, policy and funding strategies for technology. Similarly, local criminal justice agencies sometimes make decisions about purchasing complex technology which they don’t fully understand, and base their decisions primarily on information from the vendors who are working to sell the technology. At the same time, other localities may already have experience using and understanding the technology, but there is no simple way to share this information so it benefits the entire criminal justice system.

What Needs to be Done

1. Identify and assess the different types of technology being used by Virginia’s public safety agencies, and use what is learned to improve efforts to enhance public safety technology applications.

Virginia needs to better understand how public safety agencies are now using technology, what is working and what is not, and what are the challenges and needs facing these agencies. Public safety officials should make an effort to identify and catalog what is now being used throughout Virginia, as well as the technology-related problems and needs among criminal justice agencies. This information can then be used to inform and shape technology-related state policy and practices that are more strategic and coordinated, and to develop funding strategies that promote coordinated and cost-effective uses of technology in criminal justice.

2. Provide Virginia’s criminal justice agencies with information they need to stay aware of new technologies that can improve their operations.

Many local criminal justice agencies, particularly smaller agencies, do not have the resources to keep up with, evaluate or obtain new technologies. As a result, they may be unaware of technology applications that could improve the efficiency of their operations, or they may end up purchasing technology products that don’t meet their needs.



State public safety officials should do more to provide local agencies with information about new technologies and their applications. For example, Virginia could develop, for use by all criminal justice agencies, a central “clearinghouse” of information about the types of technology that are now being used by agencies across the Commonwealth. Agencies interested in exploring or acquiring new technologies could query the clearinghouse and determine what technologies are being used by other agencies, what their experiences have been with them, and who to contact to learn more about them. Fostering such a “peer-to-peer” information exchange would allow all criminal justice agencies in Virginia to benefit from what has been learned through the experiences of other agencies. Smaller agencies could ‘piggyback’ on the resources and experiences of larger agencies, and could obtain more objective information about these technologies than that available through technology vendors.

3. Create statewide technology standards for criminal justice agencies.

Virginia public safety officials should examine the feasibility of developing minimum technology standards for criminal justice agencies in the Commonwealth. These standards would help guide the use of technology by providing voluntary, baseline requirements for technology used by criminal justice agencies. Efforts to meet these standards and guidelines could also serve as a basis for agencies to justify requests for technology purchases or upgrades through federal and/or state funding programs.

These standards could incorporate information developed by national organizations. For example, the National Institute for Justice uses its Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation process to develop minimum performance standards for public safety equipment. Research, reviews and standards for criminal justice technology are also developed by organizations including the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center, the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s Office of Law Enforcement Standards, and the National Center for State Courts. Virginia public safety officials should draw upon these and similar organizations for information on which to base Virginia technology standards.

4

DIVERTING NONVIOLENT OFFENDERS FROM JAILS AND PRISONS

Overview

Programs to divert low-risk offenders from jail or prison offer several potential benefits for Virginia’s criminal justice system. Such programs can provide these offenders with services, such as drug or mental health treatment, which may not be available in jail or prison. They can allow offenders to maintain employment and connections with their families and communities, both critical for their successful return to society. Diversion also helps keep non-violent offenders from mixing with more serious violent offender populations in jails and prisons. Finally, diversion programs can help reduce public safety costs because they are less expensive than incarceration and they free up costly jail and prison space for more serious offenders.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that diversion — if used correctly — is beneficial for both offenders and the criminal justice system. However, there are serious challenges to successfully and appropriately diverting non-violent offenders. Relatively few diversion options are widely available. Some are underused, while others are overused. Agencies that operate diversion programs don’t always use evidence-based-practices, such as scientifically validated criminogenic risk assessment instruments to identify offenders who are appropriate for diversion. Finally, there is still resistance to the basic idea of diverting offenders from incarceration. Actions to overcome these obstacles could improve the effectiveness of Virginia’s criminal justice system, reduce costs, and still maintain public safety.

What Needs to be Done

1. Increase the acceptance of diversion programs among elected officials, criminal justice system personnel, and the general public.

A major obstacle to increasing the use of diversion programs is the belief by many elected officials and the public that diversion (as opposed to incarceration) is “soft on crime” and allows dangerous criminals to remain free in the community. Some criminal justice officials see diversion as risky and potentially short-circuiting the judicial sentencing process.

Public safety officials should recognize and respond to these concerns and questions. The use of diversion could be expanded if public safety officials acted to raise awareness about the effectiveness and cost benefits of well-designed and executed programs. Locally elected officials and the public might be more willing to accept diversion programs if they were more informed about their benefits. Similarly, legislators might be more willing to support and fund diversion programs if they were presented with convincing evidence that they are safe and effective. Judges, Commonwealth’s Attorneys, community probation and parole officers and other criminal justice system officials might be more willing to implement diversion programs if they were shown evidence that diversion programs, when properly designed and conducted, can be more useful than incarceration.

2. Encourage and support efforts to develop and improve methods for identifying offenders who are appropriate candidates for diversion.

In the 1980s, the widespread perception that “nothing works” dampened efforts to develop programs to divert offenders from jail and prison. Since then, however, research has disproved the idea that “nothing works” by demonstrating that correctly used diversion programs can and do work. A major component of successful diversion programs is identifying offenders who are suitable for diversion, and screening out those who are not.

Virginia agencies are developing and using risk assessment instruments that have been scientifically validated and shown to identify the best candidates for diversion programs. For example, pretrial programs across Virginia



are using the Virginia Pretrial Risk Assessment Instrument to identify appropriate candidates for diversion prior to trial. The Department of Juvenile Justice is using the Detention Assessment Instrument and the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument to help identify youth for diversion from incarceration. The Department of Corrections is working to validate the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions program to identify offenders suitable for diversion. The Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission has developed a risk assessment instrument that is used to identify low-risk offenders and divert them from incarceration.

Public safety officials should encourage criminal justice agencies to continuously develop, implement and evaluate methods for screening and assessing candidates for diversion. Doing so will help to ensure that Virginia gets the most return — and the highest level of public safety — from diversion programs.

3. Encourage and support continued monitoring and evaluation of diversion programs, to identify those that are the most effective in reducing re-offending and re-incarceration.

Although ample evidence that offender diversion programs can work has been developed nationally, public safety officials should ensure that Virginia programs are continuously monitored and evaluated. For example, when a proven diversion program model is implemented, it is critical that the implementation be monitored to be sure that the program is actually following the proven model. Similarly, new national research and practices are continuously refining and improving offender diversion programs, and Virginia's public safety agencies must follow these developments, apply them to their own programs when appropriate, and adjust programs when needed.

Public safety officials should encourage state and local diversion programs to routinely monitor diverted offenders to track their recidivism rates, and insure that diverted offenders are not posing unacceptable risks to public safety. Diversion programs also should be encouraged to monitor offender success measures such as employment rates, education levels, and housing/family stability. Monitoring diversion successes, as well as failures, will help officials identify and replicate the diversion programs that provide the best returns.

Overview

From 2001 to 2006, 54,000 inmates left Virginia's prison system to return to society. These ex-offenders often return to a relatively small number of cities, and concentrate in communities with few opportunities for employment, education or other services needed for reentering society.

The National Governor's Association 2004 report *The Challenges and Impacts of Prisoner Reentry* noted that, nationally, an inmate returning to prison costs an average of \$22,650 annually. The report stated that "Effective reentry policies save money and make better use of limited resources by establishing a more coordinated and comprehensive continuum of care and supervision. Even small reductions in recidivism rates will generate substantial cost-savings by avoiding more costly re-incarceration."

Recidivism studies suggest that the savings for Virginia could be substantial. The Department of Corrections tracked ex-offenders released from prison in 1999, and found that 29% returned to prison within three years. The Department of Juvenile Justice tracked juveniles released from Juvenile Correctional Centers in 2004 and found that 21% were re-incarcerated within 12 months. In FY2007, spending on Virginia's prison system was nearly \$940 million; FY2008 spending reached \$1 billion.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that increasing the success of ex-offender reentry would improve public safety, produce savings across the criminal justice system, and reduce other government spending. The Workgroup noted that there are various reentry initiatives now underway in Virginia. However, the consensus among the regional and state criminal justice focus groups was that these reentry efforts need to be better coordinated, and that more needs to be done to determine their effectiveness.

What Needs to be Done

1. Improve coordination of Virginia's ex-offender reentry initiatives and programs.

Prisoner reentry efforts are underway by state public safety agencies including the Departments of Correctional Education, Corrections, Criminal Justice Services and Juvenile Justice. Agencies in secretariats concerned with social services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, housing, employment and education are also involved in reentry programs. The Supreme Court of Virginia's Strategic Plan has cited prisoner reentry as a growing issue. Furthermore, many local governments, private entities, and faith-based organizations operate programs to help inmates return to society.

Public safety officials should act to improve the level of coordination among the many government and non-government entities involved with reentry. Each of these entities has access to knowledge, skills, resources and practices that other groups may not. Different programs may be duplicating services, or, in some cases, contradicting one another. (The Workgroup heard of instances in which one state agency was teaching inmates job skills, while at the same time another state licensing agency was denying ex-offenders licenses to practice that skill). This coordination could be improved by facilitating state and local meetings to share information about current reentry programs and practices, by building relationships between different reentry-related service providers, by identifying and removing potential obstacles to collaboration, and by disseminating information on best practices in reentry programming.



2. Devote more attention and resources to reentry services for offenders after they are released from incarceration.

The Workgroup noted that Virginia's correctional agencies provide a range of reentry training and services to inmates while they are incarcerated. However, gains obtained from these may be reduced when there are few, or poor, follow-up services available after the inmate's release from incarceration. The state's investment in teaching an inmate a trade while in prison has little value if, once released, the ex-offender cannot find the help he or she may need to locate a job, or fill out an employment application. Money spent teaching an inmate how to complete an apartment rental application has little value if, following release, the inmate finds that community practice often makes apartments unavailable to ex-offenders.

The Governor's Reentry Policy Academy has noted that local involvement is critical to successful prisoner reentry. Public safety officials should foster local involvement by establishing a community-based, central point through which returning inmates could access available reentry-related services in the community, such as employment counseling, educational and housing opportunities, mental health or substance abuse treatment, and obtaining identification papers. Providing such "wrap-around" services would be more conducive to successful reentry than having inmates navigate services spread among numerous different locations.

3. Create public awareness and education programs about the benefits of successful offender reentry programs, to make communities more willing to accept returning inmates.

Convincing a community that it has an interest in helping returning prisoners succeed can be a hard sell. Communities already face demands for services from citizens who haven't been convicted of a crime, and returning ex-offenders are seen as threats to public safety and drains on scarce public resources. Employers see potential public relations and liability problems if they hire ex-offenders. Schools see returning juvenile offenders as potential threats to the safety of other students and staff. These concerns are real and must be acknowledged and addressed.

Public safety officials should improve ex-offender reentry efforts by making the public more aware that large numbers of inmates are leaving prison and returning to society and their home communities. All of them will return somewhere, and it is better that they return in a manner that increases their chances for success, rather than hindering them. There are costs and risks associated with reentry, but the costs of failure can be greater than the costs for success. Reentry failure is often marked by increased crime in the community, further deterioration of the community social structure, and increased costs for adjudication and incarceration.

6

RECRUITING AND RETAINING CRIMINAL JUSTICE PERSONNEL

Overview

The Criminal Justice Services Board's 1991 report *Future Directions II: A Framework for the 90's* cited a need to enhance career development opportunities in criminal justice. Sixteen years later, the Department of Human Resource Management's *2007 State Workforce Planning Report* reiterated similar needs and challenges confronting the government workforce: constraints on agencies' ability to hire, develop and manage employees due to lack of funding for performance increases; shortage of skilled applicants due to strong competition from the private sector; perceived limited career and salary growth; and the perception of government service as the 'employer of last resort.' Until these long-standing problems are addressed, the criminal justice system will continue to have trouble recruiting and retaining personnel.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that effective recruiting and retention are critical to all criminal justice agencies. Both tasks challenge state and local public safety agencies. These agencies face an older workforce with many experienced employees nearing retirement, and a new and different population from which to recruit new hires. Many public safety agencies struggle with hiring difficulties, rapid staff turnover, chronic staff shortages, and burnout. Constant recruiting and training consume limited resources, and reduce agencies' efficiency and effectiveness.

Public safety work has an image problem that makes it difficult to attract and keep employees, especially younger workers. Salaries are often low, the work is often stressful and potentially dangerous, advancement opportunities are often limited, and the work is often 24/7 with little flexibility in work hours. Chronic staff shortages exacerbate the problem by forcing staff to work long hours to make up for the shortages.

What Needs to be Done

1. Improve the image of public safety as a desirable career field.

One way to do this is to actively "market" public safety careers by emphasizing the positive social and personal aspects of the work that may appeal to young people. For example, the purpose of law enforcement work is sometimes negatively portrayed as watching citizens, enforcing rules and restricting freedoms. However, it can also be portrayed as protecting and enhancing citizens' rights to exercise their freedoms without fear, and as working to solve problems and prevent crimes before they occur. A recent Rand Corporation report noted that the U.S. Army successfully reworked a negative image (sometimes described as 'we go places and kill people') with its "Be All You Can Be" and "An Army of One" campaigns, which stressed to young people the positive personal development aspects of an Army career.

2. Review the "disqualifiers" that restrict eligibility for public safety jobs, and review the rewards and benefits of public safety jobs, to identify opportunities for improving recruitment and retention.

Public safety hiring disqualifiers such as prior minor drug use, indebtedness, etc. make it harder to find qualified employees. The generation from which new employees must be drawn is more likely to have such disqualifiers than in the past. Additionally, background checks are now more frequent, taken more seriously, and the record systems which identify these disqualifiers are more developed. The application of some of these factors may need to be reconsidered if government is to successfully recruit sufficient numbers of public safety employees.



The rewards offered for public safety work may also need to be reconsidered when recruiting from younger age groups. Government agencies will always face budget constraints, but there are options. Student tuition assistance or loan forgiveness programs are attractive incentives to students with unprecedented educational loan debts. Government should also consider offering benefits that can change during a career. For example, salaries may be a larger portion of the incentive package offered to younger employees, who typically focus on salary rather than retirement or health insurance. However, retirement or health insurance benefits incentives may be a larger portion of the package for older employees who are likely to place more value on them.

3. Explore ways to encourage employees who are seeking a job change to continue working within the public safety field.

Virginia public safety agencies constantly compete with private and federal employers, and with one another, to retain employees. When employees leave government for work in the private sector, government's investment in recruiting, training and developing them is lost. Public safety officials should develop more ways to encourage those seeking other jobs to first consider working elsewhere within public safety, rather than leaving it altogether. For example, better coordination in recruiting could make it easier for persons in public safety positions who are seeking employment elsewhere to find open positions in other public safety agencies, before they look outside of government. In this way, government's investment in training and development costs might more often be retained.

4. Continuously analyze the current and potential workforce to identify new opportunities and incentives to pursue careers in public safety.

The nature of the workforce, and the incentives and disincentives for employees, constantly change. Public safety officials should analyze human resource management literature, employee survey results, and other information to determine the most important benefits to employees at different career/life stages and create a compensation system that targets those needs. For example, studies have shown that younger workers are often enticed by positions that offer early opportunities to feel engaged in the work and the ability to make what are perceived as meaningful, important contributions to the agency's mission.

7

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TRAINING

Overview

Virginia's criminal justice system has many "interdependencies" — how well people in one part of the system do their work affects how well people in other parts of the system can do their work. The quality of the information collected during a law enforcement officer's investigation directly affects the quality of a case being prepared by a Commonwealth's Attorney. How accurately a probation officer prepares a pre-sentence investigation report can affect how quickly a court can complete a case.

Interdependencies also exist between criminal justice skills and skills that are not traditionally associated with criminal justice. Throughout the criminal justice system, personnel have to develop skills needed to understand and cope with mental illness, cultural differences like foreign languages and customs, and new technologies.

As the criminal justice system contends with a continuously changing society, more cross-functional awareness and training is essential. To confront these changes, criminal justice personnel need broader, more multi-disciplinary skills than in the past. Additionally, the resources that many of these agencies have to deal with these changes often remain unchanged or are shrinking. Agencies are continually being asked to do more with less. Providing multidisciplinary, cross-functional training may to help stretch limited resources.

Findings

The Workgroup viewed the need for multidisciplinary training as a compliment to the need for more cooperation and coordination between criminal justice agencies. The Workgroup felt that any individual working in the criminal justice system would be more effective at his or her own job if he or she was more aware of how his/her work affects others working in the criminal justice system.

The lack of a criminal justice *system* identity was cited as a hindrance to effective work. Criminal justice personnel sometimes tend to think of themselves as employees of a single department or agency only, and may be reluctant to invest time and effort to understanding other parts of the system. Sometimes criminal justice personnel will actively avoid training about work outside their immediate functional areas, or discourage "outsiders" from attending their agency's training. In contrast to this view, a Workgroup member from the Department of Corrections stated that DOC's multi-disciplinary approach to dealing with prisoner reentry is 'the best thing that ever happened to us.'

What Needs to be Done

1. Increase opportunities for multidisciplinary training in the criminal justice system.

Individual criminal justice agencies spend considerable resources teaching their personnel skills that are also being taught by many other criminal justice agencies. Sharing similar trainings across different agencies could help to reduce training costs and at the same time provide opportunities for workers to better understand how their work affects workers in other agencies, thus improving interagency coordination.

Multidisciplinary cross training may be beneficial at different levels of the criminal justice system. Training for executive and management level officials may identify opportunities for broad, high-level cooperation between different agencies. Similarly, multi-disciplinary training at the 'worker-bee' level offers opportunities for individuals to understand how their routine work affects workers in other parts of the system, and to foster cooperation that benefits many different agencies. Such training programs might be modeled on the Commonwealth Management Institute and the Virginia Executive Institute, which bring together employees from many different state agencies.



2. Create more of a culture of networking, resource exchange and awareness between criminal justice agencies.

Criminal justice employees often operate in their agencies and have little knowledge of the larger criminal justice system in which they work. Indeed, in some large criminal justice agencies, employees work with very little awareness of what other workers elsewhere in their own agencies are doing.

Coordinated, collaborative training will help to create a more open culture within the criminal justice community by encouraging interagency relationships and communication. Public safety officials should actively encourage policies and programs that make their employees more aware of the issues faced by others in the system, the skills and approaches they use to deal with these issues, and the lessons learned elsewhere in the system. Understanding different disciplines within, and beyond, the criminal justice system will help raise the effectiveness of individuals throughout the system.

STANDARDIZED TRAINING AND TESTING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Overview

Virginia law enforcement officers are required by statute to comply with minimum training standards established by the Commonwealth. Standards and training for law enforcement officers focus on four areas: performance outcomes, training objective statements, criteria for testing, and a lesson plan guide defining what shall be covered in a lesson plan. This training is delivered by 28 certified training academies across the Commonwealth. A curriculum review committee identifies potential training updates annually, and the training academies are reviewed for recertification every three years.

Despite these standards, there are questions about whether all law enforcement officers receive adequate, consistent training, and whether this results in inconsistent levels of skill and performance. The 1986 “*Gallagher Report*” and the 1999 JLARC report *Review of Regional Criminal Justice Training Academies* cited concerns about training quality and consistency among Virginia’s academies. These studies noted the following: training varies widely in content and length in different academies; many academy instructors are volunteers with varied skill levels, experience and knowledge; academies develop their own tests and administer and grade them; and academies determine how retesting occurs. In short, there is no standardized test of knowledge, skills and abilities for law enforcement officers.

Concerns about whether all officers are receiving the same level of entry-level training have caused some large law enforcement agencies to require officers transferring into their departments to attend the agencies’ own full entry-level training program, even if they have previously received the state mandated training elsewhere. This results in significant costs for agencies and detracts from the overall intent of standardized law enforcement training.

Findings

The Workgroup identified steps for consideration by the Commonwealth to ensure that its law enforcement officers consistently provide citizens with professional, high-quality services. To this end, officers should be trained, tested and certified in a more consistent, standardized manner, regardless of where Virginia they receive their training.

What Needs to be Done

1. Create a standardized, detailed entry-level course curriculum for mandated use by all law enforcement training academies.

Public safety officials should develop and require a standardized curriculum that specifies the content that must be covered in training, and the number of hours that must be devoted to each content area. Academies may choose to train to more than the mandated minimum standards, but the minimum standards must be presented in a consistent manner at all training academies. The curriculum should be detailed enough to ensure that the training is delivered consistently by all persons providing the instruction. Such consistency would help ensure the portability of certification between different law enforcement agencies across Virginia.



2. Consult with law enforcement professional associations and internal affairs offices, judges, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and other criminal justice bodies to identify areas where law enforcement training needs improvement.

Each of these groups has unique experiences and insights into how well current law enforcement training and testing is equipping officers to perform their duties. Internal affairs officers are able to identify the problem areas most often encountered by their agencies. Prosecutors and judges are experienced with how well law enforcement officers are gathering and presenting information and evidence during trials. Public safety officials should draw upon the experience and expertise of these groups to help curriculum developers and trainers determine where training improvements are needed.

3. Develop a standardized method for testing law enforcement officers on their knowledge and understanding of the mandated entry-level training content.

Public safety officials should support efforts to develop Academy testing procedures which ensure that testing and scoring methods, the actual scores required for successful completion and certification, and the processes for retesting are applied in a consistent, standardized manner at all Virginia training academies.

4. Partner with community colleges to provide some of the training mandated for law enforcement officers.

Public safety officials should examine the feasibility of partnering with community colleges to provide some of the classroom training required for certification, and providing this training to individuals prior to their joining a law enforcement agency. Using community colleges to provide this training would expand the number of locations and opportunities for receiving this training. This could provide agencies with a better trained pool of applicants, better identify individuals with a commitment to a law enforcement career, and reduce the amount of time that new recruits must spend away from their jobs to receive entry level training.

5. Assess how well standardized training and testing improves current law enforcement training, testing and performance.

If public safety officials determine that Virginia should require standardized training and testing for law enforcement certification, they should require assessment of the changes made and the impacts that these changes have on the delivery of law enforcement services. The assessment would determine whether the changes have actually improved law enforcement performance and services, and potentially identify areas where the training and testing process requires additional modifications. Such assessment might include surveys of police chiefs and sheriffs to determine their satisfaction with newly trained entry-level officers, and surveys of post-academy recruits to assess their satisfaction with the training they received.

Overview

The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reviewed numerous studies on how delinquency develops, and concluded that “...preventive interventions that focus on child delinquency will probably take the biggest ‘bite’ out of crime.” A recent RAND Corporation study found that money invested in delinquency prevention efforts such as parent training and school graduation incentives can provide two to three times the savings in crimes prevented than if the money were instead later invested in incarcerating child and juvenile offenders.

These preventive strategies, based on proven public health approaches for preventing injury and disease and increasing wellness, typically have two components. First, identify and reduce “risk factors” that increase a juvenile’s chances of engaging in delinquent behavior. Second, identify and strengthen “protective factors” that increase a juvenile’s ability to avoid becoming involved in delinquent behavior.

Comprehensive preventive approaches require coordinated efforts with agencies outside of traditional public safety and criminal justice — education, employment, mental health, social and family services, and substance abuse. Focusing the efforts of different government agencies on a shared problem such as delinquency prevention can be a challenge. However, the social and economic benefits of their combined efforts could be substantial. For example, combined actions to reduce truancy may simultaneously improve educational performance and employment readiness, while reducing the chances for delinquency that leads to future crime and further criminal justice expenditures.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that Virginia’s juvenile justice system already emphasizes a comprehensive, integrated approach to preventing and responding to juvenile offending.

However, the Commonwealth still can — and should — do more to develop and conduct broad-based prevention initiatives that span different branches and levels of government, and engage multiple secretariats and agencies.

Public safety officials should make concerted efforts to create the understanding and cooperation needed to integrate the work of these different government agencies. In particular, it is important to bring together the agencies whose activities can support early interventions to prevent delinquency, because these offer the greatest payoff in reducing future offending. Finally, it is important to identify and support prevention programs that have demonstrated that they work.

What Needs to be Done

1. Develop juvenile delinquency and crime prevention strategies that include all of society’s institutions that can help prevent juvenile delinquency and crime.

Public safety officials should encourage criminal justice agencies to adopt comprehensive prevention approaches that extend beyond traditional public safety activities. To accomplish this, criminal justice agencies should partner with other government agencies and societal institutions that can influence the factors that contribute to delinquency.

Public safety officials should foster comprehensive, interagency approaches to delinquency prevention by establishing the high-level direction and coordination needed to bring together agencies and resources from different secretariats. This cannot easily be done by individual agencies. These approaches could help to eliminate potential



barriers to coordinated efforts by, for example, encouraging public schools to accept juveniles who have had encounters with the justice system, but who do not pose safety hazards. Public safety officials could also help coordinate efforts to improve the sharing of data on at-risk juveniles between agencies in different secretariats; data which would help support integrated prevention programs, but which is unavailable due to restrictions on sharing it. They could encourage the sharing of resources, as with community assessment teams for at-risk youth, to avoid duplication of efforts and provide information to multiple agencies and service providers.

State public safety officials should also help local government agencies coordinate their juvenile crime and delinquency prevention activities. For example, the state gathers and analyzes information on juvenile risk and prevention factors, juvenile intakes and arrests, and other data that localities could use to identify juvenile problems and help target resources.

2. Focus on *early* delinquency prevention and intervention efforts.

Research has shown that early intervention is critical to preventing later delinquency and criminal behavior. Child delinquents (those less than 13 years old) have a much greater risk of becoming serious, violent, chronic juvenile offenders than juveniles who become delinquent during their teens. However, rather than focusing on approaches to preventing these young, high-risk children from becoming tomorrow's serious offenders, funding tends to be directed at providing remedial services and/or incarceration to older adolescent who have already become offenders.

Public safety officials should encourage communities to engage in collaborative, risk-focused prevention planning that incorporates programs proven to be effective in reducing/preventing early juvenile problem behaviors including delinquency, violence, gang activity, substance abuse, educational failure and pregnancy.

3. Promote delinquency prevention efforts that have a proven record of success.

Experience and research have identified juvenile delinquency and crime prevention approaches and programs that work, and those that appear promising. Public safety officials should insist that proposed and ongoing prevention efforts be based on programs with clear evidence of effectiveness. Furthermore, as Virginia adapts and applies these evidence-based practices to support its own prevention initiatives, it is important to continuously evaluate their implementation and effectiveness. Programs that have been shown to work elsewhere still need to be assessed to ensure that they are working effectively in Virginia. This is critical for identifying which approaches should receive the limited resources available for prevention programs.

Overview

When a juvenile enters Virginia's juvenile justice system, the system responds in several ways. First, it must act to ensure the juvenile cannot threaten public safety. Second, it must hold the juvenile accountable for his or her actions while under the control of the system. Third, it must strive to provide services that will help the juvenile successfully return to society after leaving the system.

The number of juveniles entering Virginia's Juvenile Correctional Centers (JCCs) — the most restrictive sanction available to the juvenile court — has dropped dramatically over the last decade. Correctional population forecasts released by the Secretary of Public Safety project that lower annual JCC admissions will continue through FY 2012. Despite this improvement, juvenile offending remains a problem. In 2007, the JCCs still held over 1,000 juveniles, while another 1,000 were being held in secure detention homes. And although JCC admissions have dropped, juveniles who are admitted are staying in longer, at an average cost of over \$100,000 a year for each youth.

Findings

The Workgroup recognized that the juvenile justice system has made continuous improvements in providing programs and services to protect public safety and rehabilitate juvenile offenders. Enactment of the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act, and the "comprehensive" and "integrated" approaches adopted by the Board of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Juvenile Justice, are aimed at fulfilling all of the roles of the system. However, as with the rest of the justice system, there are opportunities for improvement.

Among the areas that require examination and improvement are: reducing how deeply a low to moderate risk juvenile moves into the justice system, supporting juvenile offenders' successful transition out of the justice system and back into their communities, and improving understanding by government officials and the public about how the juvenile justice system works.

What Needs to be Done

1. Expand policies and practices that minimize a juvenile's involvement in the justice system, while also assuring juvenile accountability and public safety.

The deeper a juvenile offender moves into the justice system, the more likely it is that he or she will reoffend later. This is especially true for very young juveniles, and for those who enter the system for low risk, nonviolent offenses. Exposing these juveniles to the serious offenders they would likely encounter in detention or in Juvenile Correctional Centers increases their chances of learning and exhibiting more dangerous criminal behavior later. Reducing deeper movement into the system can also reduce the costly system resources that must be devoted to these juveniles.

Public safety officials should encourage the juvenile justice system to expand and refine a system of graduated sanctions that provides the least restrictive sanctions compatible with public safety. Juveniles should be assessed at major decision points in the system to determine whether they should move further into the system or are eligible for diversion or some lesser sanction. Such assessments may be time-consuming, but they can result in better outcomes for juveniles and society.

2. Emphasize and support programs that help juvenile offenders successfully transition back into their communities.

Juvenile offenders returning to the community face unique obstacles. For example, many juveniles are legally required to attend school. However, schools are reluctant to accept students with juvenile records, fearing safety



or discipline problems in the classroom. Juveniles older than 17 ½ years can face another problem. They are considered “emancipated,” and may not be returning to the families that raised them. These juveniles may need additional assistance that is similar to the re-entry services adult offenders typically need, such as help finding employment and housing.

To help overcome these and other reentry obstacles, public safety officials should consider expanding the use of transition specialists/case managers for juvenile offenders to help them in their return to their communities. These specialists could provide assistance to the juvenile (and his or her family) with returning to school, obtaining employment or housing, and obtaining identification documentation.

3. Educate policy makers, criminal justice professionals, and the public about the juvenile justice system.

The juvenile justice system is often misunderstood by public safety officials, and by the public, both of whom generally are more familiar with the adult justice system. The juvenile system has its own laws, courts, procedures and terminology. It deals with offenders ranging from 10-year-old status offenders to older teens who commit serious violent crimes. The juvenile system is more focused than the adult system on correcting behaviors while holding the juvenile accountable for their crime(s). These differences sometimes lead to mistrust of the system.

Public safety officials should consider developing training programs for personnel at all levels of the criminal justice system, to help increase their awareness and understanding of juvenile justice practices and initiatives. For example, such training could make law enforcement officers more aware of the case for assessing juvenile offenders, and make judges more aware of alternatives to incarceration. Juvenile justice officials should also develop media relations and public education programs that provide accurate reporting of trends in juvenile offending, and better understanding of the philosophy, goals and operations of the juvenile justice system.

4. Expand the use of best practices and evaluation throughout the juvenile justice system.

The juvenile justice system has limited resources, so these resources must be targeted to programs and practices that are effective. Public safety officials should expand the use of evidence based practices, and continuously evaluate the programs and tools used throughout the system. Additionally, the juvenile justice system should do more to evaluate the performance of the many non-government service providers that it relies upon to provide services to juveniles.

Overview

Many Virginia localities report that there is gang activity in their jurisdictions, and state law enforcement officials report that gang activity is spreading from urban areas into smaller cities, towns and rural communities. The types of gangs being reported range from relatively small juvenile “wannabe” groups to notoriously violent gangs like the Bloods, the Crips and MS-13.

Gangs affect communities by creating fear among citizens, enticing juveniles into delinquency and crime, and generally contributing to neighborhood decline which fosters further criminal activity. The effects on the criminal justice system are equally widespread. Law enforcement agencies must devote time and resources responding to gang-related crime and violence. Adult and juvenile correctional agencies must monitor gang activity to prevent inter-gang violence between inmates in their facilities. State and local agencies devote resources to anti-gang efforts such as the Gang Reduction and Intervention Program and the Gang Resistance Education and Training program. Finally, other community services organizations such as schools and public housing agencies must devote resources to gang prevention efforts.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that over the last several years Virginia officials have increased anti-gang initiatives. In 2006, the Governor’s *Executive Order 15* established the *Interagency Anti-Gang Workgroup* to promote collaboration among state agencies involved in gang reduction and prevention efforts. Also in 2006, the Virginia State Crime Commission issued a report outlining actions to provide Commonwealth’s Attorneys with more information to use when prosecuting gang crimes. Various state and local public safety agencies have created specialized units devoted to gang prevention and suppression activities.

More needs to be done to combat gangs in Virginia. Public safety officials need better information about gangs and their activities, and about which types of gang prevention and reduction programs are effective. Anti-gang initiatives require coordination between local and state public safety agencies and other government and community organizations such as schools and social services agencies. Finally, state and local efforts to reduce and prevent gang activity must address the community conditions that foster the development of gangs.

What Needs to be Done

1. Improve our understanding of the nature and extent of gang activity in Virginia.

Public safety officials cannot respond effectively to gangs unless they first understand the nature and extent of Virginia’s gang problem. However, reports from executive and legislative agencies state that Virginia does not have the information needed to develop this understanding. By their nature, gangs can be difficult to define, from both a legal and a “street” standpoint. Gangs are as individual as their members and communities. Emerging gangs often “cut and paste” characteristics from existing gangs, mixing names, colors, symbols, etc., making it difficult to identify and distinguish them.

Because different officials define gangs differently, it is hard to know how many gangs there are in Virginia, or where they are located. This makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to target and take steps to reduce gang activity. It also is difficult to prosecute gang members, because the legal definitions of gang members and activities do not keep up with the changing characteristics of gangs. Finally, without accurate measures of gang presence and activity, public safety officials cannot measure the effectiveness of anti-gang efforts.



Public safety officials should work to develop a consensus on how to define and recognize gangs. They also should work with the legislature to make the legal definitions of gangs and gang activities more in line with the characteristics of gangs and gang activities reported by local officials. Additionally, public safety officials should develop a consistent method for measuring the presence and extent of gangs and gang activity across Virginia. More accurate measures will help to reduce conflicting claims about how many gangs exist, where they exist, how much of a threat they pose, and what needs to be done to combat them. It would also help officials assess the effectiveness of anti-gang activities.

2. Identify and use proven best practices to develop gang-related programs, services, practices and legislation.

Due to the many different types of gang members, structures and activities, it is often difficult to identify effective gang prevention and reduction practices. The Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the National Youth Gang Center have published information on best practices developed across the nation. Many of these practices emphasize multi-agency collaborations that focus on identifying and acknowledging the problem, community mobilization, promoting alternatives to gang activities, social intervention, and suppression.

Public safety officials should work to identify and keep up with known, proven “best practices,” and to track others as they evolve. They should encourage state and local agencies to review and, where appropriate, adopt these practices as they develop and implement anti-gang initiatives. Furthermore, public safety officials should monitor and evaluate anti-gang initiatives, and help communities institute and replicate those that are proven to be effective.

3. Focus on social and community factors that contribute to gang development when designing gang prevention initiatives.

Gangs are often symptoms of other problems in the community — at home, in the streets and in schools. Federal research has noted that “...gangs are, in part, a response to community dysfunction.” Gangs often entice individuals to join by promising to provide a sense of safety, identity, belonging and economic opportunity that they cannot find elsewhere in the community.

Public safety officials should encourage gang prevention efforts that address such community factors through collaborations that combine law enforcement, court and correctional efforts with efforts by schools, social and health services providers, faith-based organizations and businesses. These approaches can include strengthening families, improving community protective factors such as educational, employment and recreational opportunities, and enforcing truancy and curfew laws. Attention should also be given to programs to help jail and prison inmates previously affiliated with gangs or susceptible to gang involvement successfully return to the community, to reduce the chances that gangs will entice them into new criminal activity.

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PREVENTING CRIME

Overview

Preventing crime from occurring in the first place is the most effective way of reducing the physical, emotional and financial costs of crime on individuals and society. Crime prevention has been defined as “the anticipation, appraisal and assessment of a crime risk and the initiation of some activity to reduce or remove that risk.” Simply put, it is the removal or reduction of the opportunity for crime. This philosophy is reflected in the well-known proverb “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

The *Code of Virginia* (§ 15.2-1704, Powers and Duties of Police Force), defines the responsibilities and powers of the police force in Virginia. The first responsibility cited is the prevention of crime: “The police force of a locality is hereby invested with all the power and authority which formerly belonged to the office of constable at common law and is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of criminals, the safeguard of life and property, the preservation of peace and the enforcement of state and local laws, regulations, and ordinances.” (Italics added).

Findings

The Workgroup noted that, although state and local crime prevention efforts are widespread and ongoing, public safety officials should give them higher priority. This should be done by identifying well-designed crime prevention programs and strategies that have been shown to be successful and cost-effective; and by encouraging active public and community support and participation. When these strategies are implemented, they should be evaluated to determine if they are implemented correctly and are achieving their goals.

What Needs to be Done

1. Increase support for crime prevention resources by demonstrating the effectiveness of crime prevention.

Crime prevention is universally cited as a basic, effective way to reduce the burden of crime on individuals and society. However, it is difficult to convince public officials to devote resources to prevention unless there is evidence that doing so will produce a net benefit. There is convincing evidence that investments in crime prevention can be cost-effective. Public safety officials should use such evidence to make the case for devoting resources to crime prevention initiatives.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy cited a state program to help juvenile offenders reduce further criminal behavior, noting that the program cost \$738 per participant, but saved taxpayers \$8,287 per participant in avoided crime costs and improved outcomes for the juveniles. The National Crime Prevention Council has identified several cost-effective crime prevention efforts. For example, Michigan invested money in a statewide program to prevent automobile thefts, and found that the program recovered nearly five dollars for each dollar spent. Communities in England invested in streetlights to help reduce crime, and realized savings due to crime reduction that were much greater than the cost of installing the lights.

2. Make crime prevention activities a greater priority in public safety agencies.

Most criminal justice agencies’ spending and activities are oriented toward reacting to crime after it has occurred — investigation, apprehension, adjudication and punishment. When crime occurs, the system must respond to it. Resources for prevention are typically not a high priority compared to the resources devoted to reacting to crime.



Public safety officials should consider putting more resources into proactive approaches to understanding crime and taking steps to prevent it, rather than simply reacting to crime after it occurs. Community policing and problem solving policing are examples of this approach — they emphasize identifying and solving problems before crime occurs, not afterward. If applied properly throughout the criminal justice system, this approach may provide a greater return on investment than reactive approaches and activities.

3. Do more to engage the public and the community in crime prevention efforts.

The National Crime Prevention Coalition noted that “One of the most important public safety developments in the past 25 years has been the birth and growth of community-focused crime prevention as a major element of civic safety.” Ultimately, effective crime prevention depends on proactive community and individual involvement, which sometimes needs to be encouraged. Communities and individuals sometimes do not become active about crime prevention until after they have been touched by crime, or until they are inundated with media coverage of a sensational crime close to home.

Public safety officials should explore ways to support and encourage community crime prevention efforts. These could include establishing community coalitions of law enforcement, local businesses, local government, service and civic organizations, faith groups, and individuals. Public safety officials should also partner with businesses and organizations to implement programs like Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which is aimed at incorporating crime prevention into the design of structures and communities.

4. Continually assess crime prevention strategies and practices, and identify and expand those that are most effective.

Before undertaking any crime prevention initiatives, public safety officials should insist that these activities be based on sound, evidence-based principles and practices. Furthermore, when these activities are undertaken, they should be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Supporting evaluations of prevention efforts and programs, with a focus on proven cost-effectiveness, is essential to securing continued funding for them.

Public safety officials also should recognize the difference between crime prevention programs that are popular and those that are effective. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice report *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising* cited research demonstrating that the original Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program was very popular but ineffective at actually reducing drug abuse (the DARE curriculum has since been revised). Public safety officials should insist that crime prevention resources be targeted for programs that use evidence-based practices.

Overview

Virginia's public schools and college campuses are exceptionally safe places. Nonetheless, crime and violence do occur there. Statistics show an annual average of nearly 18,000 reported offenses at Virginia schools and campuses. Most were less serious offenses such as thefts, simple assaults, and drug possession. However, tragic events such as the April 2007 mass murder, and the January 2009 decapitation murder, at Virginia Tech highlight the need for constant vigilance.

Schools, colleges and universities typically contain hundreds or thousands of students, teachers, staff and visitors. Some campuses are, in effect, small cities, with many different buildings and types of facilities. As potential targets, schools and campuses have vulnerabilities similar to shopping malls and transportation hubs — large numbers of people and relatively open public access. Research universities offer other potential targets — atomic reactors, biological research facilities, and stocks of dangerous materials. While these institutions must be safeguarded, security measures must be balanced against maintaining open and productive learning environments.

Findings

In the wake of tragedies such as Columbine and Virginia Tech, Virginia has already taken many steps to improve school and campus safety and security. However, the Work Group identified further steps for consideration by the Commonwealth.

What Needs to be Done

1. Obtain more information about best practices in school and campus security, and use it to develop safety-related legislation, regulations, policies and practices.

Currently, there are few proven best practices available for guiding efforts to improve school and campus safety; the field is still developing. The lack of proven best practices makes it difficult for state and local governments to develop, recommend or endorse specific safety-related initiatives with confidence. Public safety and education officials should consider convening experts on school and campus safety issues to identify existing best practices, develop best practices where none now exist, and develop methods for routinely applying these practices in the design and operation of schools and campuses.

2. Improve current methods for gathering, interpreting and applying information about the state of safety and security at public schools.

Virginia law now requires annual school safety audits for all of the state's 2,000 K-12 public schools. Information gained from these audits is reported to the Governor and the General Assembly, and is used to help guide school safety-related initiatives. However, as shown by the examples below, current reporting requirements have shortcomings that should be addressed by public safety officials.

Statutory provisions related to school safety should be reviewed to identify which mandates are currently feasible and which are not, and action taken to address any inconsistencies noted. For example, current language requires law enforcement to report any criminal incidents involving a public school student to the principal of the student's school, even if the incident occurs in a jurisdiction far from where the student actually attends school. However, there is no process in place for easily providing such notifications.

Mandated school safety audit results are reported by the schools themselves, with no independent verification of the accuracy of the reporting. Furthermore, there are no real consequences for failure to report, or for reporting inaccurate or incomplete information. Public safety and education officials should consider implementing an



independent verification of the information reported by schools, and potential sanctions for non-reporting. Conversely, officials should consider methods for publicly identifying and recognizing schools that have superior safety/security practices, and using them as models to encourage other schools to adopt their practices.

3. Gather and assess information about the current state of safety and security at colleges and universities.

Unlike the safety audit requirements that apply to K-12 schools, Virginia law does not require uniform reporting of safety-related conditions and practices at public colleges and universities to help guide safety improvement efforts. In the wake of the 2007 Virginia Tech tragedy, officials began to focus on developing better security measures for higher education. However, there is little information to guide these efforts. Virginia should consider developing an ongoing safety audit process for colleges and universities.

4. Broaden school and campus security measures to include off-campus settings and activities such as school buses, athletic events and class field trips.

Most security initiatives focus on school buildings and campuses. However, many education-related events take place away from these settings. These events can be targets for deliberate attack, or be vulnerable to natural disasters. Virginia public safety and education officials should take steps to ensure that the unique characteristics of these activities are considered in safety-related planning and initiatives.

5. Avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach to improving school and campus security

Virginia’s educational facilities generally fall into three types of settings: public schools serving grades K-12, campuses of community colleges and smaller colleges, and campuses of large major colleges and universities. Each of these settings has different types of facilities, populations, and resources devoted to ensuring safety. Safety initiatives developed for one type may not be appropriate at other types of facilities. Public safety officials should ensure that safety-related initiatives, policies and requirements recognize and account for these differences.

Overview

Domestic preparedness initiatives, especially since the attacks of September 2001, have had major impacts on state and local public safety planning in Virginia. Although much of this attention initially focused on preventing and preparing for terrorist attacks, other potential threats such as Katrina-scale hurricanes and flu pandemics have emphasized the need for an “all-hazards” approach to domestic emergency preparedness.

Recent man-made and natural disasters have shown that public safety planning and capabilities must respond to events larger and more catastrophic than those typically envisioned in the past. Given the scale of these potential events, response planning and coordination between different government agencies, and between government and non-government institutions, are critical.

Funding, resources and attention to domestic preparedness and homeland security have greatly expanded since 2001. However, some public safety officials believe that the focus on preparing for potential terrorist attacks has drained resources needed to conduct routine — but still important — criminal justice and public safety activities.

Findings

The Work Group identified various challenges to assuring preparedness for catastrophic events. One is the need to improve the general public’s preparation and readiness to respond to such events. During the first few hours or days of large-scale disasters, first responders and public safety officials must focus on the most critical effects and victims of the disaster, leaving most individuals to cope largely by relying on their own resources. Educating and encouraging people to prepare in advance to ‘ride out’ the immediate after-effects of a disaster will help Virginia focus its limited public safety resources on those who do need immediate assistance.

Another major challenge is coordinating the planning done by the many agencies at all levels of government that would respond to a catastrophic event. The Workgroup noted that although many of them have developed individual disaster response plans, state and local agencies that must work together have not always planned for how ‘working together’ would actually occur. This is a concern regarding how well different state agencies work together, how well state agencies work with local agencies, and how well state and local government actions will be coordinated with federal actions.

What Needs to be Done

1. Increase public awareness and preparation for emergency and disaster threats.

Virginia does not have the resources to provide immediate assistance to the thousands, or even millions, of citizens who could be directly affected by a major disaster. Therefore, public safety officials should do more to educate and encourage individuals and families to prepare for disasters before they strike. This includes educating the public about what types of disasters they should prepare for, and about why, when and how they should prepare. Agencies such as the Department of Emergency Management already provide this type of information, but the Workgroup believes that even more public preparation awareness and education are needed.

The Workgroup noted that although prudent preparation requires an “all-hazards” approach, public safety officials should focus Virginia’s limited disaster awareness and preparation resources on the types of events that are most likely to have large-scale effects on Virginia citizens, such as hurricanes or flooding.



2. Increase collaboration between different branches and levels of government involved in disaster preparedness.

Virginia's public safety agencies have already developed extensive plans for responding to catastrophic events. However, there are still gaps in coordinating the responses of multiple agencies. Public safety and related agencies should conduct more multi-agency modeling and training exercises to test and refine how they will coordinate their responses. They should also coordinate their preparedness plans with private security agencies, which now supply many of the likely 'first responders' to emergency events.

Agencies also must coordinate their continuity of operations plans (COOPs) for maintaining critical operations during disasters. For example, state public safety agencies and the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA) should agree on plans for VITA's restoration of agency computer systems if disabled by a disaster. Similarly, the Supreme Court and public safety agencies and offices should coordinate their COOP plans to ensure that activities such as issuing search and arrest warrants, conducting arraignments, and similar legal processes can function following a catastrophic event.

The Workgroup noted that some major metropolitan localities such as Tidewater and Northern Virginia have created regional disaster response plans. Virginia state government should encourage smaller localities with regional concerns to consider doing the same.

3. Ensure that state and local domestic preparedness plans are coordinated with federal requirements and processes.

A catastrophic event in Virginia may require a federal response as well as state and local government responses. Federal agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and federal response planning efforts such as the National Response Framework and the National Incident Management System, are designed to help plan and guide state-federal disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Virginia public safety officials should ensure that all state and local preparedness, response and recovery planning take into account federal mandates or guidelines that must be followed to coordinate Virginia's disaster planning with that of the federal government.

4. Establish methods for clearly communicating who is in charge at emergency scenes.

Previous responses to emergencies have shown that when multiple agencies respond, there may be confusion and delay if the responders are not clear on who has jurisdiction or is "in charge" of managing the scene. Public safety officials should consider developing a uniform credentialing system that will clearly identify who is authorized to respond to an emergency and who is in charge at the scene. All potential first responders in Virginia should be trained to recognize and understand this credentialing system.

Overview

Virginia's jails and prisons comprise one of the largest mental health treatment systems in the Commonwealth. Scarce state and community mental health treatment services often mean that the criminal justice system becomes the default or 'last resort' for persons with mental health problems. Virginia law enforcement agencies, courts and corrections agencies now devote extensive time and resources to dealing with people who are exhibiting signs of mental illness, often masked in low-risk or nonviolent offenses. Criminal justice time and resources spent dealing with mentally ill persons could be better spent on more traditional and pressing public safety needs.

The 2005 National Institute of Corrections report *Improving the Response to Offenders with Mental Illness Through Mental Health and Criminal Justice Collaboration* cited as a major emerging theme in criminal justice "the need for strategic collaboration between the judiciary, criminal justice, and mental health agencies in diverting persons with mental illness from correctional institutions, when appropriate." Incarcerating the mentally ill can be doubly damaging, because prison and jail environments often exacerbate their symptoms.

In Virginia, the *Governor's Public Safety Summit of 2005* identified handling persons with mental illness and substance abuse problems as among the most difficult situations facing law enforcement officers. It is often dangerous and time consuming. Officers are neither well trained nor equipped to properly handle the mentally ill. Scarce mental health treatment resources in many Virginia localities means that the mentally ill, even when involved in only minor criminal activity, may be committed to local or regional jails. Once incarcerated, their mental health problems may worsen if they go undiagnosed and untreated.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that Virginia has been devoting increased attention and resources to the issues posed by the mentally ill in the criminal justice system. For example, in 2008, Governor's *Executive Order 62* established the *Commonwealth Consortium for Mental Health/Criminal Justice Transformation* to examine ways to prevent persons with mental illness from unnecessarily entering the criminal justice system, and to improve access to mental health treatment for persons who are in the criminal justice system. The Workgroup noted that, although such steps are being taken, services for the mentally ill remain scattered and scarce, and too many of the mentally ill continue to be swept into the criminal justice system.

What Needs to be Done

1. Enhance efforts to bring criminal justice, mental health and other officials together to develop multi-disciplinary responses to persons with mental illness.

Neither the criminal justice system nor the mental health system can, individually, keep the mentally ill from needlessly entering the criminal justice system. Similarly, neither one alone can appropriately provide services for mentally ill persons who do belong in the criminal justice system. A coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach is the best way to determine how the mentally ill can be diverted to treatment services rather than be incarcerated, how such services can be provided to those who are in the criminal justice system, and how ex-offenders can be linked to mental health services following their release from jail or prison.

Fortunately, Virginia is moving toward such a multidisciplinary approach. The *Commonwealth Consortium for Mental Health/Criminal Justice Transformation* is bringing together public safety/criminal justice and mental health agencies and organizations, plus agencies providing health, education, housing, substance abuse and other social services. The Supreme Court's *Commission on Mental Health Law Reform* recently studied and made



recommendations on how laws concerning mentally ill persons can be improved and updated following the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings tragedy. Public safety officials should continue to provide the oversight and leadership needed to ensure a continued, multidisciplinary approach to responding to persons with mental illness.

2. Consider establishing a Criminal Justice/Mental Health Justice Training Academy for the Commonwealth, as recommended in *Executive Order 62*.

Personnel in the criminal justice system and in the mental health system need to know how to respond to individuals who straddle the two systems. Criminal justice personnel should not become clinicians, nor should mental health personnel become law enforcement or judicial officers. However, if criminal justice personnel (especially in law enforcement) were trained to recognize the signs of mental illness, they would be better able to determine when referral to mental health services is appropriate. Similarly, if mental health personnel were better trained to recognize when an individual requires criminal justice intervention, or presents a potential danger to others, they would be better able to contribute to public safety.

A promising approach is the “sequential intercept” model, which is designed to identify persons with mental illness at different stages in the criminal justice system (arrest, jail, initial hearings, etc.) and divert them to mental health providers. This includes creating law enforcement crisis intervention teams, and training community mental health providers to help develop services plans for mentally ill offenders who reenter society after release from prison.

Public safety officials should consider establishing a criminal justice-mental health training academy to provide education and cross-training for criminal justice and mental health personnel.

3. Identify the range of mental health services available in Virginia, including in state and local correctional facilities, and determine how the services available compare to the demand for these services.

Preliminary work has been done to identify the number of mentally ill individuals in Virginia’s local jails and in detention centers, and to assess what types of collaborative efforts now exist between community mental health and criminal justice agencies. However, there still is little comprehensive information available on what level of mental health services is available throughout Virginia. Without such information, officials cannot plan for how to improve existing services, and fill in service gaps where they exist.

Public safety officials should continue to work with mental health officials to comprehensively assess the mental health services available in Virginia, and the extent of the demand for these services, so planning and programs to address these needs are based on complete and accurate information.

Overview

Drugs contribute to crime in many ways. Most directly, it is a crime to illegally possess, manufacture, or distribute controlled substances. Drugs cause crime through the violence and other illegal activity connected with drug manufacture and trafficking, and through crimes committed to obtain money to purchase drugs. Finally, some drugs contribute to crime through the behavioral effects that the drugs have on an offender's behavior.

Drug-related crime also has many impacts on the criminal justice system. Law enforcement made 32,365 adult arrests for drug offenses in Virginia in 2007, an increase of 55% over the number in 2000. From 2000 to 2007, more arrests were made for drug crimes than for violent crimes or property crimes, and the number of drug arrests rose while the number of violent and property crime arrests dropped. The number of drug felony convictions in Virginia's courts increased by more than 60% from 2000 to 2007. This growth in drug arrests and convictions also added to Virginia's growing and costly prison population. From FY 2000 to 2007, drug offenders comprised about 25% of the inmates committed to the Department of Corrections.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that illegal drugs have an impact on every part of Virginia's criminal justice system. Maintaining the resources needed to detect, apprehend, adjudicate and punish drug offenders is one of the biggest challenges — in terms of money, personnel and time — to the criminal justice system. Equally challenging is measuring the system's success or failure in reducing the availability and use of illegal drugs, which makes it difficult to assess what gains the Commonwealth receives for this significant investment of resources.

The Workgroup also noted another impact that drugs have on the criminal justice system. At the same time that the system is trying to enforce drug laws, adjudicate drug cases, and treat and/or punish drug offenders, society has not really figured out what it wants to "do" about drugs. Some say that the price that drugs exact on society justifies whatever resources are needed by law enforcement, courts, jails and prisons to combat drugs. Others say that enforcing drug laws and imprisoning drug offenders is unjust, erodes public confidence in the justice system, and diverts scarce resources that should be spent on other public safety problems. The criminal justice system is caught in the middle as society continuously tries to reconcile these two conflicting views.

What Needs to be Done

1. Develop a consensus on Virginia's overall approach to drug policy.

Criminal justice personnel feel that their jobs are made more difficult because they must respond to society's changing and conflicting views about drugs. Drug policy is criticized as disjointed, costly and ineffective, in part because Virginia — like other states — has no consistent view about what should be "done" about drugs. Administrations and legislators, who represent the views of Virginia's citizens, reflect this confusion. In some years, zero tolerance and harsh sentences are favored. In others, treatment and rehabilitation are favored. In some years, the system encourages the swelling of prison populations through sentencing enhancements and mandatory minimum penalties for drug offenders. In others, when prisons become too overcrowded and expensive, the system is encouraged to make non-violent drug offenders candidates for early release because they are not as threatening as other types of offenders.

Because drugs are such a contentious, costly and time-consuming issue for the criminal justice system, Virginia officials in the executive, legislative and judicial branches should work together and try to find a common ground on which to base drug policy. Admittedly this would be a difficult task, but doing it would likely make it easier and less costly for the criminal justice system to do its job.



2. Improve and enhance drug prevention and treatment programs.

Drug prevention programs can reduce the impact of drugs on the criminal justice system by reducing the level of overall drug use. Treatment programs have been shown to be a cost-effective way to reduce drug dependency and associated criminal behaviors. Drug courts offer one possible solution for focusing more on treatment than on incarceration for drug offenders. Public safety officials should require well-designed 'cost-benefit' studies to measure and compare the relative costs and impacts of prevention, treatment and incarceration programs.

Although drug prevention and treatment programs may offer cost savings compared to enforcement and incarceration, they do impose costs and, to be successful, public safety officials must sustain these programs. Prevention and treatment resources are often early casualties when public safety budgets are reduced. Funding these by assessing fees on drug offenders is popular because the costs would fall on offenders rather than taxpayers, but this often doesn't work because offenders don't have the money to pay these fees.

3. Consider modifying drug sentencing laws and enforcement practices to reduce the impact of drug-related activity on the criminal justice system.

Modifying the penalties for drug offense convictions offers a possible way to reduce the impact of drugs on the criminal justice system. Penalties are needed to serve as a deterrent and punish offenders who break the law, but there may be ways to modify current drug sentencing laws to reduce the impact. For example, "zero tolerance" and mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses contribute to drug offenders clogging jails and prisons. A 1997 Rand study examining the use of mandatory minimums in cocaine cases found that "Mandatory minimum sentences are not justifiable on the basis of cost-effectiveness at reducing cocaine consumption or drug-related crime." Modifying some lengthy drug offense penalties is not the same as decriminalizing drug offenses. However, it may be worth examining whether the scarce resources needed to maintain mandatory minimums are a worthwhile public safety investment.

Another possibility for reducing the impact of drugs is to reconsider how the criminal justice system devotes time and resources to different types of drug offenses. For example, Virginia drug seizure data shows that marijuana is consistently the most frequently seized drug across the Commonwealth. It is seized more often than cocaine, heroin, or amphetamines. It may be worth examining whether the resources spent on the large number of marijuana seizures would be better invested in attacking the 'harder' drugs.

Overview

Research offers a compelling case for treating and rehabilitating people with substance abuse problems. The U.S. General Accounting Office review of the Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime program cited drug abuse treatment as effective when it includes: 1) coordinated criminal justice efforts, 2) incentives to enter treatment, 3) matching offenders with treatment, and 4) drug test monitoring. The justice system can apply pressure on offenders to undergo treatment, and research shows that these offenders have outcomes as good as or better than those who entered treatment without legal compulsion.

The financial case for treatment is also compelling. In 2004, the Office of National Drug Control Policy stated that in 2002 an estimated \$108 billion was associated with drug related crime, including criminal justice costs and costs borne by crime victims. The cost of treating drug abuse, including research, training and prevention efforts, was estimated at \$16 billion.

Drug treatment efforts can be incorporated at various points in the criminal justice system. Drug education and treatment programs can be offered in jails and prisons. Community correctional agencies may include treatment as a condition of probation. Drug courts, which blend monitoring and sanctions with treatment, may offer treatment in prison followed by community-based treatment after release, and treatment under parole or probation supervision.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that, ideally, many substance abusers can be identified and treated without involvement by the criminal justice system. However, many criminal offenders with drug problems will continue to enter the system, and many will be incarcerated. Some degree of treatment and rehabilitation services within the criminal justice system must be part of the mix.

Virginia needs a better process for identifying offenders who require substance abuse treatment, so treatment resources can be correctly targeted. Also, existing treatment programs often lack the resources to deal with the large numbers of drug-dependant offenders entering the system. Treatment program sustainability and stability are major challenges. Past treatment programs have been short-lived due to changes in the political climate and funding priorities.

The Workgroup identified drug treatment courts as a promising approach to providing treatment services to offenders, and to reducing the costs associated with incarcerating drug offenders.

What Needs to be Done

1. Improve the criminal justice system's capacity to identify persons who need substance abuse treatment.

Early and accurate identification of offenders who need substance treatment is essential for targeting limited treatment resources. Even if ways are found to reduce the number of substance abusers entering the criminal justice system, the numbers who continue to do so will be large. Public safety officials should put into place an ongoing screening and assessment process to identify which offenders sentenced to incarceration need treatment. Screenings should initially identify persons suspected of needing treatment and be used to direct those who do need it to more complete assessments and treatment programs. Virginia's 1998 Drug Offender Screening, Assessment and Treatment (DSAT) initiative was aimed at creating such a process, but funding for the program was discontinued.



2. Identify critical points within the criminal justice system where drug treatment efforts are the most effective, and focus programs and resources on these points.

Public safety officials need to target limited substance abuse treatment resources at the points in the criminal justice system where offenders are most likely to benefit from the programs. The Workgroup noted that many inmates serving time in local jails are not under jail control for long enough to complete drug treatment programs (Virginia's Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program, for example, requires a 90-day minimum). The Department of Corrections provides drug treatment programs that may require up to 24 months to complete, but some inmates placed in the program are released before they can complete it, or are transferred to another facility that does not provide the program.

3. Consider expanding drug treatment courts.

Virginia judicial officials have noted that some courts feel that restrictive sentencing laws limit the courts ability to try new and potentially promising options for diverting substance-abusing offenders to treatment rather than to more punitive sentencing options. Drug treatment courts are seen as one way to focus more on treatment options. These courts are specialized dockets within the court system that offer judicial monitoring of intensive treatment and strict supervision of addicts in drug and drug-related cases.

Virginia's Drug Treatment Court Act (§ 18.2-254.1) specifies the goals of drug treatment courts as: (i) reducing drug addiction and drug dependency among offenders; (ii) reducing recidivism; (iii) reducing drug-related court workloads; (iv) increasing personal, familial and societal accountability among offenders; and, (v) promoting effective planning and use of resources among the criminal justice system and community agencies.

A preliminary 2008 evaluation report on Virginia's drug treatment courts found that offenders who completed the drug court program were less likely to be rearrested than offenders who did not participate in the program. Although a complete evaluation of Virginia's drug courts has not yet been completed, this finding is consistent with an earlier report on drug treatment courts prepared by the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Committee.

Public safety officials should continue to examine drug courts as a way of providing treatment to substance abuse offenders while at the same time reducing the costs that drugs impose on the criminal justice system.

Overview

Fair, equal and consistent treatment of all individuals under the law is a cornerstone principle of the criminal justice system. The system must strive to ensure that everyone has consistent and equal access to justice, and that no one is treated unfairly because of race, gender, age, disability or socioeconomic status.

Public trust that the system adheres to these principles is also essential. The justice system cannot work, and justice cannot be achieved, without public trust in the system and the authorities who serve in it. When citizens don't trust the justice system, they are less likely to support it. This hampers public safety because crimes are not reported, information is not provided to help investigations, cases are dismissed when witnesses do not come forward or testify in court, citizens avoid jury duty, and those who do serve may distrust the system and refuse to convict the guilty.

Findings

The Workgroup cited public concerns that the justice system does not treat all individuals fairly and equally. Media reports, for example, often cite charges that law enforcement officers disproportionately stop and question minority motorists for "driving while black." The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency cites the disproportionate number of minority youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system as a national. The Workgroup also noted that criminal justice agencies sometimes resist collecting or sharing information that might help determine if and where inequalities and inconsistencies may be occurring. Whether or not such concerns are valid, if the public *believes* that they are this alone is a major problem for the criminal justice system.

What Needs to be Done

- 1. Collect information to identify where inequities and inconsistencies occur in the criminal justice system, use this information to reduce these inequities and inconsistencies, and inform the public about these efforts.**

The Workgroup noted that there are many problems with collecting, interpreting and reporting data about potential inequalities and inconsistencies. Public reporting of criminal justice trends rarely contains information about larger societal problems which can unequally affect some demographic groups, and thus contribute to overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

However, these difficulties should not stop public safety agencies from collecting information that could help them identify potential or actual inconsistencies and inequalities. Virginia should monitor the demographic distribution of those who come into contact with the criminal justice system; especially those detained, arrested and incarcerated, and use this to identify potential problem areas. This information should be used to remedy any inequalities or inconsistencies that actually do appear to be based on unfair policies and practices. When efforts are made to identify and remedy such problems, these efforts should be publicized, so the public will see that the system is making good faith efforts to eliminate any real or perceived injustices.

Criminal justice agencies often react reflexively to charges of inequality: scrambling "after-the-fact" to develop data and solutions to respond to such reports. Public safety officials should encourage criminal justice agencies to proactively put in place procedures for identifying and dealing with inconsistencies and inequalities.



2. Recognize and respond to public perceptions of inequality in the criminal justice system.

The criminal justice system relies on public trust, and perception plays a vital role in this trust. Public safety officials should promote efforts to assess public perceptions about the fairness of the criminal justice system, and use these assessments to determine where inequalities are thought to exist and attempt to determine the reasons for such perceptions. These assessments should focus on determining where different perceptions may exist between different demographic groups in society. When such differences are found, public safety officials should actively respond to these perceptions, whether real or imagined, to eliminate or mitigate reasons for the concerns.

3. Expand minority recruitment and cultural diversity training programs for public safety personnel.

Some members of the public, particularly those in minority groups, see themselves and the criminal justice system as two different and opposing groups, “us versus them”. In minority and immigrant communities, this view often is exacerbated by the fact that the people who are the ‘face’ of the criminal justice system don’t look and act like those who live in the community. Often, people in the criminal justice system don’t understand the language or the customs of community they serve, nor do people in the community understand the language and customs of the people that represent the system in their community.

This lack of mutual understanding can lead to misperceptions on both sides, fostering concerns about unequal and inconsistent access to justice. Public safety officials should encourage and support training for criminal justice personnel aimed at reducing these misunderstandings. Such training should include language and communications skills, understanding cultural differences and how these differences can affect perceptions of, and behaviors toward, the criminal justice system and those who represent it. Public safety officials also should actively work to encourage minority recruitment and service in the criminal justice system, to help the ‘face’ of the system more closely resemble the communities and citizens it serves.

Overview

The University of Virginia reported in 2007 that one in every ten Virginians is foreign-born. Responding to immigrants — both legal and illegal — has rapidly become one of the most complex issues confronting Virginia's criminal justice system.

Local law enforcement agencies, for example, face two demands. They are trying to develop legal, workable policies for dealing with *illegal* immigrants while, at the same time, they are struggling to develop the cultural competencies needed to serve growing populations of *legal* immigrants. The courts also face challenges. For example, the *2004-2006 Strategic Plan of the Judicial System of Virginia* cites problems dealing with the linguistic and cultural barriers that immigrant communities say they encounter in the courts. State and local corrections officials face cultural and communications problems with foreign-born inmates as well. A 2007 State Crime Commission report noted that 10% of Virginia's jail inmates are suspected of being illegal immigrants.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that every part of the state and local criminal justice system is affected by immigration, with the greatest impact at the local level. It also noted that public safety itself is affected. Immigrants are more likely to be crime victims than non-immigrants, but are often afraid to report crime to authorities for fear of deportation or other legal action. The National Institute of Justice stated that this failure to report crime allows criminals to go free and erodes the criminal justice system. This problem is aggravated because new immigrants often cluster in urban neighborhoods already burdened with high poverty, poor housing and schools and high crime rates.

As Virginia's immigrant population expands, differences in culture, language, and perceptions will continue to grow and confront the criminal justice system. These differences will be reflected in both the personnel who work in the system, and in the diverse populations served by the system. If the criminal justice system is to successfully manage these changes, public safety officials and agencies will have to actively "stay in front" of the immigration issue rather than just respond to it as it evolves.

What Needs to be Done

- 1. Provide state and local agencies with information to help them work better with immigrant communities. Focus on making improvements that avoid the unresolved "politics" of the immigration issue.**

Federal law preempts many state and local measures aimed at dealing with immigration. This puts state and local criminal justice officials in a bind, because federal leaders themselves cannot agree on immigration laws and policies. The divergent views at the federal level are reflected in Virginia. Some local officials advocate policies that are seen as "tolerating" immigrants who may not have entered the country legally, as long as they provide a labor force and don't pose an obvious threat to public safety. Others advocate strict policies that emphasize identifying, arresting and deporting illegal immigrants. The criminal justice system is caught in the middle. While elected officials debate these questions, law enforcement, courts and corrections personnel are left trying to respond to the complex, everyday realities of dealing with legal and illegal immigrant populations.

Public safety officials should help the criminal justice system navigate these issues by providing leadership and guidance on improvements that can be made now, despite the larger, unresolved national policy questions. For example, public safety officials could identify "lessons learned" by states like California, Florida and Texas, which have more experience dealing with immigrant issues, and provide this information to Virginia's criminal



justice personnel. Officials also could encourage training programs to improve how criminal justice personnel communicate with members of immigrant communities. Finally, public safety officials could encourage the development and dissemination of model criminal justice policies and programs that foster crime prevention and crime reporting practices in immigrant communities.

2. Emphasize and promote diversity in criminal justice recruitment and diversity training programs.

The criminal justice system does not have enough personnel who understand the languages and cultures of the various immigrant populations that it serves. Personnel who do have these skills are hard to find and difficult to retain. Public safety officials should develop and support programs to recruit personnel who are as diverse as the populations of the communities they serve. They also should encourage criminal justice personnel to study and learn as much as they can about the different cultures they serve.

Public safety officials should examine incentives such as compensation and recognition programs, salary supplements for bilingual employees who use their foreign language skills in their jobs, and tuition assistance or grant opportunities for personnel who seek job-related foreign language or cultural diversity training at community colleges.

3. Encourage community coalitions and other methods to build working relationships between the criminal justice system and immigrant communities.

State and local public safety/criminal justice officials should actively work to build and maintain partnerships and coalitions with leaders in the immigrant communities they serve. These efforts will help to build mutual understanding and trust. Outreach efforts to these communities could involve law enforcement, local businesses, local government, residents, service and civic organizations, the faith community, and others in immigrant communities.

Overview

The rights of crime victims in Virginia and the services available to them have expanded significantly over the past 20 years. Notable examples include passage of the Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act in 1995 and the 1997 amendment to the Virginia Constitution defining the rights of crime victims. Virginia officials have a duty to provide victims of crime with the rights they are due under the law. If crime victims feel that these rights and protections are not adequately provided or effective, they may feel further victimized, and be less willing to report crimes and participate in the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

Although victims' rights are defined in the Constitution, the actions necessary to make them a reality are the responsibility of all three branches of government at both the state and local levels. Furthermore, victims themselves must be informed of the actions they should take to exercise these rights. Crime victim's rights advocates have argued that in Virginia, as in other states, there are areas in which improvements are needed in how these rights are explained and provided to crime victims.

Findings

The Workgroup identified areas that public safety officials should review. For example, crime victims are not always informed of their rights and the services available, and don't always have a 'voice' in the criminal justice process. Additionally, victims often have no clear mechanism through which to assert their rights, and no remedy available when they are unable to exercise these rights. The Workgroup also found that there is confusion among criminal justice personnel and among crime victims about their respective legal obligations.

What Needs to be Done

1. Provide public safety practitioners, victims' services providers, and crime victims with clear information about what legal obligations the Commonwealth has for providing services to crime victims.

Although crime victims are guaranteed certain rights by Virginia's Constitution, the *Code of Virginia*, and federal law, there is confusion about who is responsible for honoring these guarantees. For example, the Code accords victims the right to receive notice of judicial proceedings involving their cases, and to be advised if the person who victimized them is to be released from custody or escapes. But how is this to be done, and by whom? Is the Commonwealth obligated to continuously track the location of every crime victim, so it is able to notify them of these events? Or is it the responsibility of the victims to continuously provide their location information to the Commonwealth? What should be done if a crime victim says that he/she does not want any more involvement with a criminal case or the offender, if the law says the Commonwealth is obligated to provide certain notices or services? Are there legal liabilities for the Commonwealth and/or the victim if they fail to act in maintaining or providing such notices or services? Are they legally accountable if they do not?

Answers to these types of questions are not always apparent to victims, victims' advocates and criminal justice system personnel who deal with victims. Sometimes neither the victims nor 'the system' have a clear, common understanding about exactly what they are supposed to do. Public safety officials should examine these questions, develop answers, and make them readily available to both criminal justice system personnel and to crime victims.

2. Improve the coordination and delivery of information, resources and services to crime victims.

Exercising the rights and obtaining the services to which victims are legally entitled can be a confusing and daunting process. The victim may need to contact multiple agencies and ask very specific questions to determine



what rights and services are available and how to receive them. Public safety officials should examine the feasibility of improving current methods of providing crime victims with information. This approach might include taking steps to enhance the ties between different public and private victim services providers, with the goal of creating user-friendly, one-stop centers and “wrap around” services for victims.

3. Educate criminal justice personnel who deal with crime victims about the rights and services the system is supposed to provide and about what responsibilities both the system and crime victims have to ensure that these services are provided.

Victims’ rights advocates have noted that the types and levels of services for crime victims vary across Virginia. This is especially true for certain types of victims, such as victims of sexual violence. Previous research has cited the need for better education for victims’ advocates, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other criminal justice personnel who work with crime victims. Public safety officials should examine the feasibility of developing more standardized training for these individuals to help improve the services provided to victims.

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PUBLIC AWARENESS

Overview

The criminal justice system alone cannot combat crime and ensure public safety. Maintaining public safety and a civil, secure society requires the participation of an informed and involved public. Citizens play a vital role in supporting public safety — in preventing, detecting and reporting crimes; in providing information to help authorities investigate and solve crimes; and in serving as witnesses and jurors in judicial proceedings.

Public participation and support for the criminal justice system depend on citizens having a basic understanding of what the criminal justice system is, how it works, and what it can and cannot do. Unfortunately, that basic understanding has been hampered by the trend in public education to de-emphasize what used to be called “civics,” and by media-driven misperceptions and sensationalism concerning crime and criminal justice.

Popular television dramas contribute to unrealistic public expectations about criminal justice. The “CSI effect,” for example, has led juries to believe that prosecutors didn’t make convincing cases in court because they did not present the sophisticated gadgets and technology routinely shown in the TV show. Print and broadcast news coverage often focus on sensational crime incidents, with little coverage of the complex and mundane issues that routinely confront the criminal justice system. Political debates about criminal justice issues are often reduced to simplistic slogans designed more to influence public opinion than to provide information to support informed public decisions about criminal justice issues.

Findings

The Workgroup noted that, although public awareness and participation are vital for an effective criminal justice system, Virginia’s public safety officials and agencies do little to actively encourage or improve public awareness. Public safety agency efforts aimed at public outreach and awareness are usually limited, spotty and inconsistent. Efforts to improve public awareness and increase public participation in the criminal justice system offer many potential benefits, including more information to assist with criminal investigations, more participation in judicial proceedings, and more public understanding and support.

What Needs to be Done

1. Improve public awareness of the criminal justice system, to foster better public understanding, trust and participation in the system.

Public safety officials and practitioners typically operate “inside” government and the criminal justice system. They can easily become so involved with administering and “doing” public safety and criminal justice that they lose sight of how the “outside” public views what they do. Business and industry, on the other hand, have long recognized that public awareness and perception are critical to their success; and, as a result, they devote substantial time, effort and resources to understanding public perceptions, managing media relations, and “getting their message out.”

Rather than simply responding to news stories and “brush fires” after they occur, public safety officials and agencies should work proactively to improve their understanding of how the public views their basic mission and their performance. They should then use this information to identify public information needs, and to develop strategies for providing information to the public. These efforts should not be directed only at the media and the general public, but also should include state and local government decision-makers, professional associations, private and public nonprofit organizations working in public safety, and members of the General Assembly.



2. Explore partnerships with professional advertising agencies to develop campaigns to encourage public understanding of, and involvement in, the criminal justice system.

Professional advertising agencies generally house the most skilled public relations and marketing talent. They have the most expertise at crafting and presenting information to the public, and at measuring how the public responds. The criminal justice system has used professional advertising agencies in the past, such as with the publicity campaigns developed for Project EXILE and the Ready Campaign for domestic preparedness. Public safety officials should explore partnerships with these commercial agencies to conduct polling or survey research to provide a better understanding of the public's perceptions of public safety issues, and to provide citizens with more information about the criminal justice system and the role the public plays in making the system work.

When conducting public opinion research or developing public information programs — whether by using professional agencies or through in-house initiatives — public safety officials also must be cognizant of the difference between actions designed to inform the public and understand its perceptions, and actions that might be perceived as trying to manipulate public opinion.

3. Develop a training program to improve the effectiveness of public information officers in criminal justice agencies.

Most public safety agencies have staff that are, either formally or informally, responsible for providing information to the public and the media. Typically, however, these officials are provided with little or no formal training in public/media relations. Additionally, when agencies do provide information to the public, it is often in response to outside queries received by the agencies. Agencies rarely act proactively to determine what information would be useful to disseminate to the public, or to actively disseminate it.

Public safety officials should consider developing a public information officer training program. The training should encourage coordination between public information offices in different criminal justice agencies to encourage the sharing and development of skills and resources.

SUMMARY

Summary of the Criminal Justice Plan Issues

Many important public safety issues were raised and discussed during the development of the criminal justice plan. The process of refining them during the focus group meetings and staff reviews resulted in the 21 issues included in this plan. However, these alone cannot define the agenda for future criminal justice activities in the Commonwealth. New and unanticipated challenges will surely emerge to demand attention.

What this plan can do is help the Secretary of Public Safety and other public safety policymakers define the broad priorities and directions on which to focus their attention, action and resources. With that in mind, DCJS believes that the 21 criminal justice issues defined in this plan are worthy of significant attention by the Commonwealth for the following reasons:

The process used to identify the issues in the plan was broad-based

More than 150 experts initially assembled to identify topics for the criminal justice plan represented experience and expertise from all parts of the criminal justice system, and from related agencies. Furthermore, they represented both state and local points of view, drawn from regions of Virginia with different populations, geographies, economies and public safety concerns. This broad scope of knowledge, experience and backgrounds helped to reduce the likelihood that topics would be selected based on a preset agenda or the views of a few influential members.

The additional research then conducted by DCJS found ample evidence that these criminal justice topics have likewise been deemed important by federal officials and agencies, by public safety officials in other states, and by national public safety professional organizations. Perhaps more importantly, the research also showed that Virginia has deemed them important; this is evident in the *Code*, in reports from the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and in the strategic plans and mission statements of major public safety agencies and organizations.

The issues in the plan have historically been cited as important

Even a cursory search of reports produced by Virginia government, some years or even decades old, shows that many of the topics identified by the plan have been cited repeatedly as needing attention. Reports by numerous past study groups, legislative study commissions, executive task forces, blue-ribbon panels and public safety agencies often included the same findings. Few of the criminal justice issues identified are new. What characterizes many of them is that they have been around for decades.

Some criminal justice professionals noted that many of these issues remain unresolved because they are seen as controversial — they are politically and/or publicly unpopular, or require resolving differences between powerful constituencies. Others say that they are simply not “high-profile” enough to garner serious attention — they involve routine, operational aspects of the criminal justice system which get little public or political attention, but which nevertheless are critical to the everyday functioning of the system. In either case, continuing to defer action on them may make future potential solutions more constrained and more costly. Taking considered, planned steps to begin addressing these issues now may provide policy-makers with more, and potentially less costly, options for dealing with them than it would to let them continue to languish.

Actions to address any single issue in the plan can be leveraged to address others

Most of the 21 individual issues identified in this plan overlap significantly with other issues in the plan. This means that successful efforts to address many of the individual issues cited in the plan will have beneficial effects on other important issues as well. There are many examples. Improved *coordination and collaboration* in the criminal justice system requires more *information sharing*, which in turn depends on better use of *technology*. Increased *coordination and collaboration* between public safety agencies and schools can help to enhance *security at schools and college/university campuses*, combat *juvenile gangs*, and foster *juvenile crime prevention* efforts. Steps to *divert nonviolent offenders from jails and prisons* will reinforce efforts to remove persons incarcerated primarily due to *mental illness* or *substance abuse* problems, which can free up resources for *improving reentry* for returning ex-offenders. The importance of *equality and consistency* in the criminal justice system is particularly relevant as the system seeks to respond to challenges posed by the growth in *immigration*, which in turn highlights needs for *multidisciplinary training* to help criminal justice officials respond to these and other challenges.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Despite its seemingly disjointed nature, Virginia's criminal justice system is in fact a system. Criminologists have compared this system to a river. Its major sources are the individual and societal factors that foster crime. These sources feed the river, and help generate the many criminal activities that damage Virginia's citizens and society. These activities, in turn, drive the growing numbers of personnel and amount of resources that government must devote to dealing with crime — the number of responses, investigations and arrests made by law enforcement; prosecutions and adjudications processed by the courts, and inmates incarcerated and supervised by jails, prisons and community corrections agencies. All of these activities, and many others, constitute the flow of the river, the volume with which all of the agencies and institutions of the criminal justice system must contend.

Actions by the Commonwealth to stem the river's sources — to reduce the factors that foster crime, and strengthen those that resist crime — will reduce the flow downriver that must be managed by the criminal justice system. And along the entire length of this river, at any single point in the system, actions by the Commonwealth to move the flow more efficiently, to prevent obstructions and delays, eliminate backups and surges, will ensure that the system as a whole works better and more effectively.

The interconnected nature of the criminal justice issues described in this plan demonstrates that any meaningful efforts by the Commonwealth to deal with these issues logically must contain some element of 'big picture' planning. Few if any of these issues can be remedied in any one place alone, or through any one approach alone, or by any single agency alone. Many of the issues cited in the plan may have remained issues for so long due, at least in part, to piecemeal, brushfire-fighting approaches taken in the past.

The purpose of the statewide criminal justice plan is to provide a framework for a more comprehensive, integrated and fiscally effective way of viewing and managing the Commonwealth's criminal justice system. It does not imply or require imposing some form of rigid central control over the criminal justice system. Nor does it presume to threaten the deliberate and necessary separation of the executive and judicial criminal justice functions, or the division of state and local criminal justice functions, or the independence of locally elected criminal justice officers. The purpose of the plan is to help Virginia's criminal justice system operate more effectively, more efficiently, and more fairly, to improve the safety of all of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements

The Statewide Criminal Justice Plan staff gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following individuals in the development of criminal justice plan.

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The Department of Criminal Justice Services also wishes to again extend its thanks to the many criminal justice professional, practitioners and other experts who participated in the focus groups conducted throughout Virginia. These individuals, primarily those serving “in the trenches” of the criminal justice system, provided the information that led to the identification and understanding of the topics and issues cited in the criminal justice plan.



Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
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